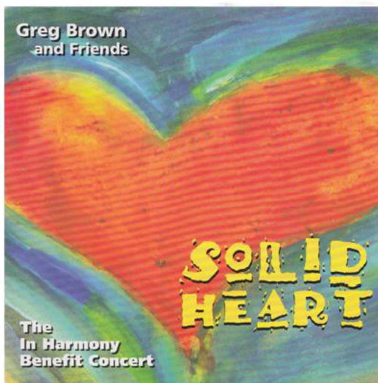
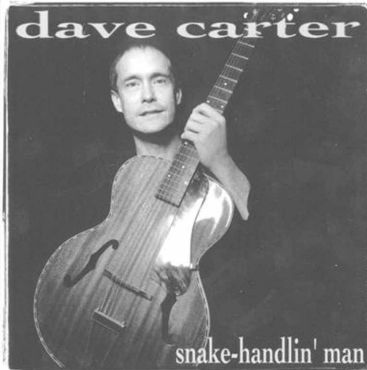


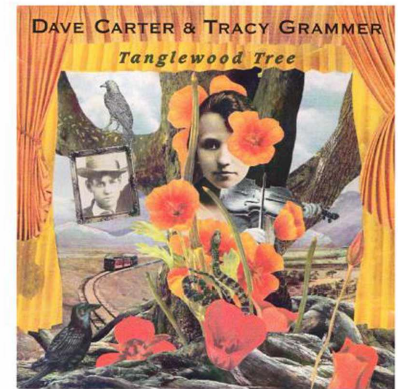
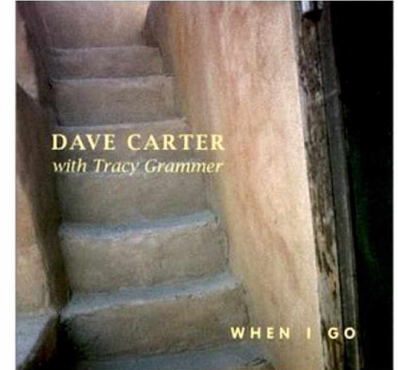
KERRVILLE KRONIKLE

No. 27

12th. Year



Photograph : Dan Betenbender



The Dave Carter & Tracy Grammer Special

"Dave & Tracy's Tanglewood Tree is without a doubt the best American songwriter disc yet." – Andrew Calhoun, Waterbug Records

"I can say that right now I'm deeper in debt and more sleep deprived and everything than I ever was, and yet I've never been this happy." – Dave Carter, March 8th, 2000.

Dave Carter with Tracy Grammer / Dave Carter and Tracy Grammer / Dave Carter / Greg Brown & Friends [incl. Dave Carter and Tracy Grammer] / Richard Shindell / Mary McCaslin / Slaid Cleaves / Tim Harrison / Jimmie Dale Gilmore / Ellis Paul / Blaze Foley / Andrew Calhoun / Chris Webster / Kate Wolf / Tom Russell /

Roxy Gordon

Kerrville-kompacts,
kassettes & other
koincidences.



Kerrville-kompacts, kassettes & other koincidences.

Dave Carter with Tracy Grammer **"When I Go"** No label [Import]

A duo since early 1998, on their debut recording, Dave Carter's voice, guitar, banjo and bass, is augmented by Tracy Grammer's violin, mandolin, guitar, and supporting or solo vocals. Recorded in Grammer's kitchen, the only instrumental embellishment is the occasional appearance of Eric Park's harmonica and accordion. The sound landscapes they have painted draw comfortably and seamlessly upon traditional and contemporary folk forms. Myth, mysticism and magical events permeate the images, events and story-lines on this ten song collection of Carter originals, as the writer elevates everyday events to the level of inspirational. The opening, album title cut, underscored by banjo and Tracy's mournful fiddle, draws heavily on spiritual Native American images – *coyote, spirit dancer, fire and lightning* – as Carter eulogises the terminal event that none of us can avoid. Tracy's short, closing, high speed and energetic fiddle solo, must surely be interpreted as a wish for a swift death. A gentle air, *Annie's Lover* lyrically draws upon the same spiritual sources. Apart from Jesse James who enjoyed a short lived reign in his *"coat of flames"*, *Don't Tread On Me*, is a pastiche of late twentieth century life in the *land of the proud and free*, leavened, in word and melody, by references to Bob Dylan and Elvis Presley. In the closing cut, *Elvis Presley*, the narrator reprises a dream in which the late, rock'n'roll icon surveyed, with a degree of concern, locations once ravaged by the American Civil War. Elsewhere, twenty years of marriage turned Frank's wife into a harriidan and now *"he's headed south, the close-range victim of her saved-off mouth,"* in search of a new beginning. In making the transition, he changes his name from *Frank To Valentino*. Further mining the theme of unrequited love, *Lancelot* is an Arthurian western that features a faithless knight/cowboy, who is an *"eagle in flight and an old crow in the hay."* The alternate verse, and subsequent alternate line, vocal delivered by Dave and Tracy on *Kate And The Ghost of Lost Love* is one of album highlights. Lest you fear that this collection is a poetic, but dry, masterpiece, fantasy and humour pervade the energetic, acoustic trucking anthem *Little Liza Jane*. The [folk] music on this album employs the usual ingredients, it's the recipe that is refreshingly brave and different. Available from **Red River Records, P.O. Box # 140, 25 NW 23rd Place, Suite 6, Portland, Oregon 97210, U.S.A.**

Dave Carter & Tracy Grammer **"Tanglewood Tree"** Signature Sounds [Import]

Dave Carter **"Snake-Handlin' Man"** no label, no index no. [Import]

Greg Brown and Friends **"Solid Heart – The In Harmony Benefit Concert"** Red House [Import]

Five years young, Jim Olsen's Signature Sounds Recording Company, has, to date, concentrated on releasing recordings by east-coast based artists. Currently hailing from Portland, Oregon, Dave and Tracy are, therefore, something of a policy departure for the Massachusetts imprint. This duo's 1998 self-released, debut disc, was titled **"When I Go."** Credited to Dave Carter with Tracy Grammer, this collection finds *with* replaced by *and*. While Tracy was virtually the supporting vocalist last time around,

"Tanglewood Tree" finds her taking the lead on a quartet of cuts. Next time around, there could be a Grammer composed tune to analyse. For the time being the menu, on this studio cut collection, comprises eleven Carter originals, including the return of *"Cowboy Singer,"* the opening tune on Dave's 1995, [and only] solo recording, **"Snake-Handlin' Man."** Carter once dubbed his music, *"post-modern mythic American Music."* His stylistic influences are certainly diverse, while Carter's lyrics can be poetically complex. From the opening, acoustic guitar introduction on the up-tempo celebration, *"Happytown [All Right With Me],"* Carter's latest creations sparkle as only newly cut gems can. For twenty seconds partway through the album title track, which focuses on the pain endured and pleasure enjoyed in the name of love, Grammer delivers a searing fiddle break that is destined to become the stuff of folk legend. Akin to the myriad of roots that lie entangled beneath the stem [of a tree], their vocals on the closing verse intertwine in a *marriage* that finds them hypnotically fuse into one. Tracy's sassy vocal on the bluesy *"Crocodile Man,"* delivered in the first person singular [male gender], recounts a life lived on *the edge*. Apart from the neat gender twist, the song exposes Carter as wicked humorist. A gentle, dreamy melody underpins *"Walkin' Away From Caroline"* as the narrator recalls a love affair that drifted into indifference. *"Farewell To Fiddler's Rim,"* the only non-studio track, recorded in Tracy's kitchen, as was the whole of **When I Go**, sees Grammer shine once more on fiddle and vocal. Bonnie Brown, the heroine in the traditionally styled tale *"Cat-Eyed Willie Claims His Lover,"* is deprived of her virtue, by a man she does not love, after losing a late night, card game. Before dawn breaks, having plunged a dagger into Cat-Eyed Willie's chest, with his dying breath, Willie condemns her to a loveless future. The song ends two decades later, with Bonnie left in despair once again, after her only child deserts her. The closing lines of *"Cowboy Singer,"* a paean to the loss of innocence, finds Carter indulging [once more] in impish humour, as the narrator dreams of a musician's paradise where *"the labels don't care if you're old or you're young, and the Martins are cheaper."* The rhythmic *"Hey Conductor,"* a train song, paints colourful, action packed scenes from the era of steam engines. Even at this early date, and on the basis of its accessibility, I predict that the latter song is destined to become Carter's most covered composition. With three months of the new century already gone, **"Tanglewood Tree"** is a guaranteed entry in my *Best of 2000* list. The album is available from **Signature Sounds, P.O. Box 106, Whately, Massachusetts 01903, U.S.A.** [Web Site <http://www.signature-sounds.com>] and **Fish Records, P.O. Box 148, Shrewsbury SY3 5WQ.**

Released in 1995, it would appear that there's only a handful of copies of Dave's solo album left. Mine came from - <http://www.songs.com> in Nashville. Of the eleven tracks, *"The River, Where She Sleeps"* was included on **"When I Go,"** his duo debut with Tracy Grammer. As I noted in the review of **"Tanglewood Tree,"** *"Cowboy Singer"* reappears there. According to a recent interview I did with Dave, apart from the title cut, he hopes, at some stage, to re-record most of the songs on **"Snake-Handlin' Man."** Personal favourites here - *"Workin' For Jesus"* and *"Gun-Metal Eyes."* In terms of studio experience, these were early days for Carter, and most of the songs were cut using a band line-up. There is however, no doubting the mystical and poet vision that was already instilled in his lyrics.

Dave Carter & Tracy Grammer

The interview with Dave Carter and Tracy Grammer took place on the evening of Wednesday 8th March 2000. At least, it was the evening in the UK. Dave and Tracy were talking from that famous do-it-yourself recording studio, Tracy's kitchen in Portland, Oregon. I was sat in the hallway of Kronikle mission control in Birmingham, England. Thanks to Dave and Tracy for their time – it really was a fun way to spend three hours you guys [!], and to Michaela O'Brien for those essential photographs, CD's and her unstinting support. Dave wasn't feeling too well at the time, but as you'll soon discover, he soldiered on with humour. The idea had been to set up a phone link where Dave and Tracy could respond together to my questions. From the outset, a technical gremlin put paid to that plan. As a result, I interviewed Dave and Tracy separately. There's some overlap in the answers to a few of the questions. Other than that, what follows are the two interviews, verbatim as they happened.....

Session Uno : Dave

The articles that I've read about you state that you were raised in Norman, Oklahoma and in Texas, but where were you born.

I was born in Oxnard, California but I only lived there for three weeks. My dad was working for the navy. We immediately went back to Texas, which was home for them. We went to College Station, Texas. We lived there for a while, then moved to Tulsa – [pause] – Oklahoma. I thought maybe not all the world knows where Tulsa is [laughs], but that's in Oklahoma. I lived for a little while in Grand Prairie, Texas and in Dallas. I was in Texas from when I was really young through four, and then at various periods between the ages of seven and thirteen. Then we went back to Oklahoma. As soon as I got old enough to leave the roost, I moved to – well, the first thing I did, was I left home and hitchhiked around. I sort of had a base in Norman, Oklahoma which is a college town. I'd go to college for a while, then I'd quit school and hitchhike around. I'd go back to Tulsa from time to time and down to the Dallas area.

What exactly is your family background in terms of the UK or Europe.

Well you know, I think it's just like a lot of people in Texas. My parents are really both Texans, and there are a lot of people with Scottish ancestry and Irish ancestry in Texas. I have a lot of both of that. I'm also pretty sure that I've got some Norman ancestry too, because the name DeVere is in my family and it keeps getting passed down to various people. DeVere doesn't sound like a Celtic name to me [laughs]. My father's name is Robert DeVere Carter. His father's name was DeVere Carter.

How old were you when you left home.

Seventeen when I first left home and made it stick.

Was this with the intention of going to college.

No, that was to run away [laughs]. Things were such that it was time for me to go [laughs]. That's why I left.

Do you have any siblings.

I have a sister who now lives in Kansas City and teaches Mathematics. She's younger than I am by three or four years.



Photography : Brent Hirak

Tracy Grammer & Dave Carter : "Tanglewood Tree" publicity shot.

I believe that your father is a petroleum engineer.

Yeah, my father is a petroleum engineer and a mathematician. He was really – well, his thing with petroleum engineering is that he – well, it's hard to explain and it wouldn't make interesting reading [laughs]. Petroleum engineering is kind of a set of equations that one learns. It also requires a certain degree of ingenuity. Mathematics is actually a whole different thing, and my father applied a kind of deeper level of mathematics to petroleum engineering. That was his thing.

Presumably it was because of the oil industry that you moved between Texas and Oklahoma so much.

Yeah, there was oil stuff. Also, I was very close to my grandparents and I would spend a lot of time with them. I liked to spend as much time there as I could. This was in Grand Prairie, Texas.

Can you tell us about your mother. From what I've read she was an extremely religious woman [ED. NOTE. Dave's mother, Nadine, died in 1997. During the last years of her life she suffered from Alzheimer's Disease].

Very religious. Really a mystic, I think, in the best American sense. You know there's this kind of a – you're probably familiar with this – there's kind of a down home magical approach to Christian fundamentalism that a lot of people still have here in this country. My mother was certainly like that. She was a very interesting person. I don't know exactly what to say, because I grew up just swimming in that stuff, so I don't know what you would already know or not. There was certainly speaking in tongues.

And the laying on off hands.

Yeah, a lot of that kind of thing. She used to go around and give little talks and demonstrations of healing workshops. That's what she would do.

Was your father equally interested in religion.

Yeah, but definitely in a more left-brained sort of way. My father is deeply religious, but after my mother passed on my father became an Episcopalian, which is pretty – it's really quite a bit different to my mother's approach to religion.

We're going to broach the subject of music eventually, so it might as well be now. Was there always music in the Carter household.

Oh yeah, I remember a few things. There was a lot of religious music. I listened to a lot of hymns. My mother loved old time religious songs. Gospel songs. My father liked straight ahead, four-part choral, Lutheran sort of hymns. Also, my parents listened – always – to a lot of folk music. My father likes The Kingston Trio a lot, and I listened to people like that. I still like that kind of music. A couple of years ago at Kerrville, I heard The Limelites perform. I have to say it sounded just like the freshest, hippest thing to me that I'd heard in a long time, because those guys were just so square and so good at what they were doing. There was no pretension there at all, that I could see, and I really loved their work. We're getting off the subject there.

What's your first musical memory. The hymns.

Let me see. My first musical memory, actually, is Elvis. Every once in a while, I think, my mother's guilty pleasure was listening to Elvis [laughs]. Maybe that was a little bit of a contradiction, but that was her fun thing that she would do. She would listen to some of that stuff. My father just couldn't abide it. He couldn't stand to hear that kind of stuff. Couldn't stand to hear Elvis. I remember listening to "Blue Suede Shoes" when I was kid. I thought that was a cool song that my mum would listen to.

At the tender age of four you began piano lessons.

Yeah. I wanted to learn because I thought it would be cool to play the piano. My mother used to play "La Paloma" on the piano. "Yellow Bird," and all these Spanish sounding songs. Growing up in Texas, you

hear a lot of Mexican music. That's some of the earliest music that I really fell in love with. That Mexican sound. It's very sweet to me still. I'm a lot more influenced by it, than might show right off the bat, when you first listen to the stuff that I write. I wanted to learn it because I'd seen my mom play, but I think it was mostly my father that really wanted both my sister and me to learn to play the piano. I think he felt that that was an accomplishment, in the nineteenth century sense – and that it was important for us to learn that. His mother was really big on music. She also really pushed us to learn music.

Had your paternal grandmother been a performer per se.

No. Not really. The thing is – I have these two grandmothers, who were both big influences on me. My father's mother was well off. She was a person of a lot of heart, but also a person with a lot of structure. Maybe more structure than I liked when I was a kid.

You mean she was strict with you.

Yeah. She was strict and she had very definite ideas about how people should behave. She was a Texas, southern belle, in just the most classic sense. She told us a lot of stories and I learned a lot about our family history from her. She had a romantic love of music. She really felt that music connected one to a higher power.

From the sound of things you had a piano at home.

Yes, we did. Each grandmother had a piano and there was a piano at our house too. In Tulsa we went to a teacher, both my sister and me. In Texas we studied with my father's mother who played the piano well. All the time that I was a kid, I took piano lessons. When I was twelve, I decided that I was too grown up to play the piano and so I contrived to get a guitar. My mother's father bought me one with green stamps. He was an auto-mechanic. Later on – the next year, he got an electric guitar, in trade for fixing a car. He supplied me with both my guitars.

That must have been akin to having your wildest dreams come true.

Oh yeah. It was the greatest thing. I still have that electric guitar that my grandfather got for fixing that car. It's a great guitar. It was a Montgomery Ward guitar, and still one the best guitars I've ever played.

As a young child were you a compulsive reader. If yes, was it a family trait or just something that you did.

Yeah. Nobody has ever asked me that question before, but that is true. I read all the time. I think that it came from both sources. One thing that I appreciate about my father is that he read us poetry when we were kids. He encouraged us to read stories –

especially Rudyard Kipling. Oh who else – various outdoor authors. He encouraged us to read Mark Twain. I started life with this kind of unquestioning interest in poetry. It didn't occur to me until much later on that most people weren't really interested in it at all. I just thought that poetry was part of life.

If you were reading from an early age and also learning to play the piano, how old were you started writing music.

I started writing music when I was six. I wasn't very good at it [laughs], but I was determined [laughs].

Was this for the piano and classically oriented, or was it songs with words.

A couple of things happened when I was six. Actually when I was six, I decided that I wanted to be like Beethoven. Then I saw this famous picture of Mozart, as a boy, where he is sort of looking up at the sky and the light is shining on his frame, then I decided that I wanted to be like that. I used to try to write pieces like Beethoven and didn't meet with a lot of success [laughs], for many years, but I learned a lot playing the piano and figuring new things out. Fortunately my teacher when I was a kid – neither of the people that taught me were particularly interested in teaching composition, or really even knew anything about it. One learns by trial and error. Also when I was just a little older than that – maybe seven or eight – I started writing poetry and again, you know, it was kid's poetry. I would write long, long poems with – you know I still do that – I still like to write long, long poems with a lot of words. When I was a kid I would write these poems that were like adventures of various cartoon characters. Or fantasy characters. They would just go on and on and on.

And of course you took them to school and read them to your pals.

Oh yeah, that's right. I got a lot of credit in school for writing these poems. It was natural when I turned twelve and took up the guitar – I started trying to fit the words and the music together. I think I really got pretty serious in a way, about songwriting, when I was twelve. That's when I really started in earnest.

It was the grandfather who lived in Grand Prairie that got you the guitars. Was he your maternal grandfather.

That's right. Yes.

Was it during the spells you that lived with him that you first heard country music.

Yeah. He was – you know at that time in Texas, and I think it's still this way in parts of that state – at that time Texas was still – Texas has changed a lot in the last few years. It has grown so fast and so big. At that time I would say that Grand Prairie was still a place

that, even in fairly recent memory – in the memory of many people that were still living – Grand Prairie had been a little bit of a frontier town in a way. It's really – all around it – that was the haunt of cowboys and ranchers. At that time my maternal grandfather – who didn't have a lot of money – at that time you could buy land outside of Grand Prairie literally for nothing. Nobody thought it was any good for anything. With whatever money he could come up with, he erected stables and a little area for rodeo activities. He had been a cowboy and his friends who were cowboys – some of them were at that time, well known rodeo people and well known in the whole ranching world. They would come and hang out and drink Lone Star beer and listen to country music tapes. That's where I heard all of Hank Williams. I remember Hank Williams being on the tape player. And Porter Wagoner. And Dolly Parton – when Dolly Parton was Porter Wagoner's sidekick [laughs] I remember hearing that stuff.

My impression of Grand Prairie these days is that it's just part of the Dallas/Fort Worth conurbation.

Pretty much, yeah. Much of it, literally, has been paved over. Most of it really is an industrial park now. It's a rough area and a tough place to live. I'm always hearing about people getting shot. I went back a couple of years ago and visited the place where we used to live, and I tried to talk to some people around there and I could tell it was a tough place to live. Not a place that people wanted to talk to you about at all. Then again, just last year, Tracy and I went to what is still downtown Grand Prairie and we got out and ate at the Denny's. People were real friendly there. I could see that that same spirit that I had originally experienced and loved so much about Grand Prairie, was still present in the hearts and minds of the people there.

With a mix of classical and folk music at home, and country music from your grandfather, presumably you were continually absorbing music.

Definitely. You know when you're a kid, of course, you're not thinking about these categories and everything. I was just thinking – yeah, Kingston Trio, Mozart [laughs], Hank Williams – it was all just music to me. It all made sense. It still does – to me, I just don't see any problem with blending those – it's not even a blend for me, it's just like music. It's just normal. That's what it sounds like to me. So later after the fact that I write this stuff – of course now I'm educated in music, I've studied a lot of music. I have degrees in music. At this point I am well enough educated to know that I am blending styles. It's not that I make an effort to do it, it's just the way that it works.

Because you see no borders.

Exactly.

I believe that at one stage you became interested in eastern religions. Was this almost as a reaction against your parent's religion.

I was raised with a deep respect for the Christian path. I still have a special kind of relationship in my own heart, and I always will, with Christianity. Really try as I might to tow the line, and I really did know how to tow the line, I did everything I should have done but it just never worked – entirely – for me. I can't say it never worked at all, but it just did not seem – it didn't answer the questions that I had, and it didn't entirely fulfil a need in my life. So I started reading other things. When I was twelve years old – a pretty significant year – for a little while we were staying with my paternal grandmother in Dallas, and she would take us to the library once a week, and have us check out books. She was really a cool person in a lot of ways, a really open-minded person. A high minded person. Hard for kids to understand, but now that I am older, I really appreciate her. She encouraged us to read things that would educate us about the world. I was drawn to a book – a red book with a golden lotus on the cover. It turned out to be a book about Buddhism. That summer I also read books on yoga and other kinds of philosophies. I was really, really interested and I still am to this day. I find Buddhist philosophy has woven itself into everything I do. The same could be said also for the Christian religion – that will always be a part of what I do. I should mention that “**Tanglewood Tree**” has a very strong and cohesive thread through the whole CD on a Buddhist theme – even the cover artwork, and there's a Tibetan blessing on the back.

We'll get to the cover art, a good way down the road from here. I believe that you're related to Commanche Quanah Parker.

My paternal grandmother used to tell my sister and me this story – this is true, although I haven't been able to establish as firm a connection as my grandmother assured me that she knew of. I wish I had talked to her about this more, when I got older, because I would have been able to look all these people up. We had an aunt who was kidnapped by a Commanche chief named Peta Nocona. They had a son named Quanah Parker. Elizabeth Ann Parker, I believe, was the aunt's name. I think that's right. I may be wrong [ED. NOTE. Research has proved that her name was Cynthia Ann. She was captured in 1826 and lived with the Commanche until 1860, when she was recaptured by whites. She died in Anderson County, Texas, in 1864 shortly after the death of her daughter, Prairie Flower.] Anyway, their son Quanah Parker became a powerful and terrible enemy of the white settlers, like his father Peta Nocona had been. Quanah Parker was a brilliant strategist and was really quite a guy. He never really surrendered –

I understand that he was a rebel leader. Although the reservation system existed at that time, he wouldn't give in and go back to live there.

Well, he did eventually come in, but on his own terms. He was able to negotiate a good peace. He was a feared man until he did that. He had a lot of victories and a few defeats. He's also credited with bringing the peyote ceremony to the Commanche, through his Apache wife. She taught him the peyote ceremony. There was kind of a problem with him for a while, because he was bringing peyote on to the reservation in large quantities. This was back before peyote was illegal. And they didn't know what to do with him for a long time. A really interesting guy –

Following the same thread, how old were you when you did your first sweat lodge.

I was pretty old by then. I was – gosh, how old was I – I think I was twenty-two. At that time I was infatuated with this Osage woman and she had a beautiful voice. We used to do some music together. I kind of had a vision of her one night, that the world was – I'm really concerned with the environment, and I always have been – I had this terrible vision of the world sort of pining away. Sort of like slowly dying from all this pollution and stuff. I had a vision that Karen was sort of like this mother of the world, and that she was singing this sad, sad song – this lament – and so I wrote this twelve to fourteen minute long song and got Karen to sing it. It's an environmentally oriented song. Oriented towards what I perceived at that time, at least, to be the Native American viewpoint. It turned out, I guess, that I was right because a Seminole medicine man there in Oklahoma – his name is Frank, and I can't remember his last name – but he heard us do that song and so he invited me to the sweats. This was a really big honour, because this was before white people were being invited to the sweats. I'll never forget what an experience that was, because I had no idea what to expect. I'd imagined that a sweat lodge was. When he said “*I want you to come to the sweat lodge, and share this time with us*” – I was really honoured that he would ask, and Karen told me that was a big deal and that I really ought to go. I thought the sweat lodge would be this big timber and buckskin affair with antlers hanging inside and a big fire in the middle, and that we'd all sit around and get nice and warm. It's not that way at all [laughs]. It's this hole that's dug in the ground – I didn't know that we all had to take our clothes off – and I was kind of shy about that, but I did it anyway. You all just huddle in this little, airtight buckskin tent – looks like the size of a pup tent, only it's more of a dome. Of course its dug out underneath, so there's more room in there. Basically, you just go in there and they build this huge, steamy conglomeration of red-hot rocks and stuff and – anyway, I thought I was going to die. In a way, I think it is kind of a death experience that you have

there. I don't know, I thought it was the greatest thing in the world. It taught me some very important things about the relationship between suffering and endurance and revelation. These things, I already had a certain amount of understanding of – because I'd been studying, kind of an Asian shamanism with this Vietnamese guy that lived there.

This would be Crazy Bon.

That's right. This happened around Tulsa. Actually it was near a little town called Owasso, where the sweat was held – about ten or fifteen miles outside the town.

So what can you tell me about Crazy Bon.

Well - mainly, he was just crazy. He was interested in the archetype of the monkey, although he wouldn't have said that. He just said that he liked monkeys. He was a monkey – well, I don't know – he was this crazy guy who wrote poetry, taught meditation and martial arts. I learned a lot from that guy. I was studying Korean karate and I got tired of it [laughs]. It just wasn't – it was great, you know – I got a lot out of it – I learned a lot, and I really liked it but I wanted to do something basically weirder – I wanted to get into something really esoteric and strange and so this guy comes along. He was visiting one of the classes and Karen actually, that Osage woman, got talking to him and decided she was going to take lessons from him. After she had done that for a month – it was just too cool to pass up, so I had to go over and do it too. If you know Buddhism, it was more of the Theravadan kind of Buddhism – at that time in the US, Zen was what everybody sort of knew. Also, it was this Indo-Chinese and Vietnamese kind of mixture of magic and Buddhism. It was really pretty wild. My mother's camp definitely considered it to be demonic. I'm sure there was much praying for my soul going on during that time. I was a brash and rebellious young fellow, and of course, I would make a point of letting everybody know that I was doing something that was a little beyond the pale.

If the sweat lodge and Crazy Bon happened during your early twenties, can we just backtrack a little – you said that you got your first guitar during your early teens. Through your teen years, what did you do musically. Who, for instance, were your musical icons.

My favourite, when I was playing the electric guitar, was Johnny Winter. The Texas blues man. I really looked up to Eric Clapton and John Mayall. I'd get these old records, when Eric Clapton was playing with the John Mayall Bluesbreakers. I was a follower of B.B. King. I was really into blues for a long time. Chet Atkins – I couldn't hardly play any of his music, but I loved Chet Atkins. Let me see – big influences on my songwriting – people that I idolised when I was first starting out, were Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, Paul Simon – in the sophisticated, so to speak, songwriting camp. Also, I have to mention Woody Guthrie. There

was always a tension for me between whether I was going to be an electric guitar player or a folk artist and I remember one day really clearly, making that choice. I was listening to Joan Baez – an old, old, early Joan Baez record – my father loved folk music, but he hated Joan Baez, because he thought she was a communist, and I was listening to that and then I listened to Led Zeppelin. I was thinking "*Which of these music's do I really, really want to do the most*" [laughs].

Well, there's a marginal difference.

Yeah, that's right. But I did find that there was just something so sweet and pure about that voice and that acoustic guitar – I just loved that. I loved the way that sounded. I don't want to sound too corny about it, but I did, in that moment, pick the road less travelled. I have never regretted it. Not to say I haven't played in rock bands from time to time.

As far as the guitar is concerned, whether it was acoustic or electric, did you ever have lessons.

Yeah, I took them from this great country guitar player in Tulsa called, Wayne King. I had about a year's worth of lessons with him. Later on, I took lessons from a classical guitarist named Manuel Eglesias. That's really all the lessons I had on the guitar. The thing is, I'd had so much piano that I was able – it was a combination of piano and mathematics, and I was really able to teach myself about anything I wanted to learn on the guitar.

Presumably you could already read music.

Oh yeah. And I understood by then - I had at least my own concept of the theory of it. Workable enough that I could apply everything I had learned on the piano to the guitar. Of course, in my approach to the guitar, I have never been that interested in being an amazing, pyro-technical guitar player, or anything like that. My approach is that I have always wanted to use it to augment and make things sound better. That's really all that I'm interested in, in the guitar. Sometimes I'll sit down with somebody who wants to show me how fast he can play, or something – it just doesn't interest me at all. I don't think it has anything to do with music. You do want to build up your chops. You want to be able to do what is necessary on the instrument, but the whole idea of approaching music as an athletic event has always really put me off [laughs].

Basically it's the difference between style and content.

That's right. Yeah, very much so.

During your teen years were you ever in bands.

Yeah, I was in a rock'n'roll band, for a while, when I was eighteen. We used to travel around Kansas and Missouri and Oklahoma.

On what they called the chitlin' circuit.

Yeah, something like that. Those are great days to look back on, but I never want to live through them again. The band and the hangers-on came to eleven, and we all crammed into a van with no air conditioning. We were playing for maybe, fifteen, twenty bucks a night. We'd all sleep in the van. Sometimes, we'd have enough for us all to get a hotel room. It was just way too much togetherness for me [laughs] and I'm glad those days are over. The band went through various names, all of which are probably too embarrassing to repeat [laughs].

Did you do any recording with the band.

We would go into studio – we had a little studio we'd made inside the band house. We did some recordings, but they were never released. And hopefully those recordings are long gone and won't come back to haunt me at any time.

When did you start attending college and take your first degree.

After I had lived for about six months on the streets of Boulder, Colorado and Estes Park, Colorado.

Why Colorado.

I had never been anywhere really when I was a kid. I had only been in Oklahoma and Texas. There's not that much a variety of landscape in Northern Texas and Oklahoma. There's some, but it's mostly flat. One place that my parents had taken us, was Colorado, when I was about ten. I never forgot how beautiful and magical the mountains were. When I took it upon myself to run away from home, I went straight to the mountains. I had no concept – at that time I was immersed in J.R.R. Tolkien – I thought that maybe, somehow there was some doorway out of *this veil of tears* and into a more interesting place. That somehow, I would get to the mountains – the Rockies – and I would find a way to converse with nature spirits. Keep in mind that I grew up with this speaking in tongues, and this whole idea that there were spirits and that Jesus would protect us against them. At some point, I decided that I was really more interested in – that I thought there were sort of, good spirits – nature spirits. I really was a little bit crazy, I suppose, but not real crazy. Just a little bit flighty and full of imagination.

And searching for something. But you weren't sure what it was.

That's right. I got to the Rockies, and I hiked right up into them and realised that I wasn't going to be able to survive up there. I walked back to town and played guitar on the street for about three months. At the end of three months, living on the street, it really had made

me – it really had, I think, put me over the brink. I was really not well, mentally at that time. It makes a person desperate and hungry in a way that eventually affects their thinking process. I took it upon myself to call my parents just to say "Hi." My grades were very good in school. They said that they would help me get to college at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, which is a cheap school to attend if you're from Oklahoma. I had established residency there. What I did for years is, I would flirt with school – I'd be there for a semester and then I'd take off – go off and have adventures. Then I'd come back and work at various jobs. My parents would help me some. I'd work and then do a little bit of school. At one point, I was moving pianos and organs in Tulsa, and I just got tired of being treated like an idiot. I looked around at all the people I was working for, and they were all so proud of their degrees and everything and I thought, "*I could do this.*" That's when I threw myself into academics for a few years. I started racking up degrees. I worked really hard and was really focussed on it. I kind of sacrificed just about everything in the pursuit of higher learning. I was studying music at college.

What about playing in public.

That just went away, except for playing for jury's and recitals in school.

What was the first degree you took.

It was kind of a general, fine arts degree that allowed me to study foreign languages and art history. The emphasis was, on music. Right after that, I got a Masters in Music Theory. Then I studied Computer Science and Mathematics, because it felt like to really understand Music Theory you had to go deeper into Mathematics. I was studying Mathematics in Norman, and then I moved up to Portland.

Why Portland.

Because the west-coast is more open minded and more liberal. I was afraid to move to a big city like San Francisco or Los Angeles. I'd heard really good things about Portland. I knew that I could come up here and study – if I wanted to – I could study Tibetan Buddhism, and I knew if I wanted to study more martial arts, that there were more teachers here. I knew that I would be free to be the kind of person I wanted to be. Oklahoma is a wonderful place, in a lot of ways, but it can be a very close-minded society. It's really hard to – a lot of artists come from Oklahoma – if you choose to be an artist, there are no half measures. You have to step right off the deep end. A lot of the crazy avant-garde artists that live in New York City, come from Oklahoma. You can't just be, kind of a part time artist or sort of an artsy person. You have to completely go off the deep end. Well, I'd gone off the deep end for a while, and it wasn't working out for me like I'd have liked it to. I saw all my

friends get sick from drugs or whatever. Just bad decisions and being forced to live crazy. I really wanted to move out to a place like Portland, where I could – even though I might still be a pretty fanciful person, in certain ways, I could also be a profound person and have a little respect. In Portland, Oregon. If you say to people here “I’m a musician,” they go “Oh, good.” It’s fine to be a musician. If you say you are a musician in Oklahoma, the idea there is that you should be arrested. Musicians in Oklahoma, are considered to be about two rungs beneath burglar. A lot of people really respect burglars. It is a joke, but they do respect burglars more, because there’s kind of a daring do, about being a burglar. It takes a little gumption. Whereas people’s perception of a musician is that, they smoke a lot of pot and play music and are good for nothing.

So there’s no pride in Oklahoma about the state being the birthplace of Woody Guthrie.

Just now – in the last two years, they’ve managed to get up enough people to get this great Woody Guthrie Folk Festival going. I am so honoured to be a part of that – Tracy and I played down there last year and we’re going to be down there again this year. That was the big thing to me when I lived in Oklahoma, I wanted to help honour Woody and the work that he did. Man, people hated him down there. They tore his house down in Okemah. Okemah, is where he’s from. The first year they had that Festival, they had signs up saying “Woody Guthrie was no hero.” People didn’t like him because he had these leftist political convictions, and because he wasn’t the kind of guy you’re supposed to be in Oklahoma. It sounds like I’m just completely putting down Oklahoma – on the other hand, there are a lot of really good people in Oklahoma. People that are not – it’s kind of funny – there are big class distinctions in Oklahoma. You know, in the United States, class distinctions I think are completely different compared with Europe, or Great Britain. It’s not something you’re born with. The idea is, if you’re a person of any worth whatsoever you will make a million dollars, or, at least, appear to have made a million dollars. And that you’re going to go to the church where all the rich people go. It’s a moral thing in Oklahoma and in a lot of the United States – all through, really, the middle of the country. If you’re poor, there’s something morally reprehensible about you. Well, the people that don’t buy into that, and there are a lot of them, are pretty noble people. They have to live their lives being looked down on by the powers that be, and the people that suck up to the powers that be in Oklahoma. The powers that be and the people that suck up to them, are not at all pleased to have a Woody Guthrie Folk Festival or to honour Woody Guthrie there. There are many, many people – many of these people have chosen to go off the deep end – and those people, a lot of them, really respect that tradition.

Which year did you move up to Oregon.

Around 1991 or 1992 maybe. Something like that.

I believe that, at one stage, you worked as a jazz pianist.

Oh yeah. Well, it was that same year. The last year I lived in Oklahoma, and the first year I moved to Oregon. I did play jazz, but that’s really sort of glorifying it, to be honest. I played in piano bars and hotels. My big thing was – I was sort of Mr. Piano of Oklahoma City for about a year. I played in these luxury hotels – a luxury hotel in Oklahoma is almost a contradiction in terms. It was horrible. It was the worst job I ever had. I did it because I wanted to go to China and I made enough money to go to China. Then I made enough money to move to Oregon [laughs]. I would much rather – and I’m not kidding – wash dishes for a fifth of the pay and be happier. I absolutely hated it. I hated the music, I had to play. Not the jazz, I’d get to play some jazz every now and then. That, I really liked. I learned so much doing that. I learned a lot – I learned all these standards, and that part was good. But, man, I had to play a lot of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Neil Diamond and stuff like that.

What about Gershwin and Hoagy Carmichael.

That was the good part. They would stop me doing that. People would come up and want to hear an Elton John song or something. That sounds horrible. I’m sorry to diss all these people, because they’re fine musicians, but there’s just something about wearing a tuxedo in a cheesy restaurant and playing “Don’t Cry For Me Argentina.”

I have this feeling that you maybe hark after earlier days and simpler times.

Well, kind of. I don’t really rationally think that. I do yearn for a connection with nature. I think that there is an authenticity and directness in people that live close to the land. Even civilisation in the nineteen fifties – I think American civilisation, at least this is my theory – I don’t really know if this is true or not [laughs], but it does seem to me that there was this kind of directness and honesty and lack of pretence. Whereas nowadays, I really see it coming out of the rise of existentialism – it has taken over the whole culture, where this idea that we’re going to try to be objective about everything – and everything has to be filtered through the intellect. What this results in, is a real palpable kind of stupidity, and a lot of pretence. A lot of putting on, and a lot of being blindsided to certain obvious truths. There are a lot of things about olden times [laughs], that I like. On the other hand, I’m really glad to see that there is, at least, lip service paid to the idea that we should not be racists. We shouldn’t go around and kill other people, in other cultures, just because they’re different. We’re not automatically different because we’re us. Those sorts of things.

There's room for a lot of improvement and I think that this kind of disease of intellectualisation of everything, is something that we have to go through. We have to live through it, and learn through it. I suppose I could make a parallel in my own life – I had to live through my two years of playing piano in bars. I had to learn how to play standards. I had to learn how to wear a tuxedo and talk nicely to drunks. I had to do it. It was awful and it was soul killing, but I survived and I'm stronger for it. I think similarly, maybe, we have to go through this intoxication of trying to understand everything with the rational mind. Because for so many years, in a sense, humans simply lived in the body and were pretty much a slave to their desires. Even though there was a direct insight there, that is less available to us right now, we were held back by our inability to see past – it's just like, childish traits – there's just no way of getting into this without taking too much time.

When you were playing in the piano bar, was that full time in as much as you'd finished college.

Actually, I was still studying. I tend to work too hard. At that time I was studying Mathematics and playing the piano.

And when you moved to Portland, you continued to study Mathematics.

Yeah.

Why keep collecting degrees. Was there a reason.

Yeah. I wanted to be a songwriter, and maybe a poet if I might make so bold as to – at least, I aspired to be a poet. I had real work, that I really had to do. I had been convinced by that culture in Oklahoma, that that was not really an option. That I couldn't do that. So, I went to college. First, I thought I'd try to be a classical musician. Then, I was going to be a college professor. Then I was going to be this or that, you know. Then I was going to be a Mathematician and a computer programmer. I did all those things for a little while. I hated it. I was heart-sick. Not because those are bad things to do – I admire no-one in the world more than I admire Mathematicians or concert pianists. I mean, these are great things. All those things that I studied, but it wasn't the thing I was supposed to do – within my heart, it always gnawed at me, and I always knew that was true. I had a mystical experience in the last Mathematics class I took. They were all side-tracks. The advantage of it is that I can bring those disciplines to bear in my songwriting, when I wouldn't have been able to before. Studying Mathematics, at a serious level, your mind becomes really – you get a certain discipline of mind. Programming computers, you get an intellectual endurance that you can sit in one spot, for hours and hours and hours and not stop. There's just so much that I got out of it. Of course, clearly, the musical studies were good. Studying art history and

foreign languages I was able to – meanwhile studying all of these philosophies – all of this stuff, it just kind of like works synergistically in the music that Tracy and I are doing now. So it's good – I don't really regret it, although I did take some detours. In the long run, if it makes the music better, then that's the whole point. I can say that right now I'm deeper in debt and more sleep deprived and everything than I ever was, and yet I've never been this happy. Three years ago, I really made the commitment to drop everything else and do this – so it doesn't matter. At some point, I figured, well, if this were the natural world, at some point I would lose my edge or make a mistake and get tired and the wolves would hunt me down and tear me to shreds. Better that I can say in my own life – better that, than to spend my entire life programming a computer and come to a rich and futile end.

After the mystical experience in Portland, the way I understand it, you went and studied psychology in California.

The way that thing worked is, there's all these wild schools in California. California has a multi-tiered accreditation system. The school I went to, eventually became accredited. Eventually [laughs]. It was started by a lot of the people from the Harvard Psychology School that had dropped acid with Timothy Leary a long time ago. Incidentally, I'm talking about drugs a lot in this and I don't take any kind of drugs at all. I seldom even drink alcohol. I mean it's like twice a year, I'll have a beer or something.

And even then it's got to be a big event to have a beer.

That's exactly right. But I am interested, nevertheless, in the psychedelic experience. When I first had this experience in the Math class, I didn't really know that it was songwriting I had to do. I was still convinced I could not be a folk singer. I mean it is – it's outrageous – just think, one day you decide you're going to be a folk singer. How are you going to make a living doing that? It just makes no sense at all. When I was young, very young, a teenager, I was brave. Gradually, after that experience living on the streets in Colorado and living in Oklahoma for so long, you just get worn down. I did. I tried getting into society in a very conventional way, and it just never worked, because I'm not a conventional person I suppose. I still was afraid to do, what I wanted to do, so I thought I'd thought "Well, I'll become a Jungian psychologist." Some Jungian psychologists in town whom I called upon for advice, told me to go to this school. It was real interesting and cutting edge. They had a programme, where you would go down for these two-week seminars and then you'd come back and do your course work, wherever you happened to live in the country. It wasn't a thing where I really had to go live there, but I spent a lot of time knocking around San Francisco – the Bay Area – studying at these schools. And meeting a lot of interesting people, and

having great experiences. It was really an outgrowth of the – essentially my certificate in psychology is really a certificate in meditation, shamanic work – those sorts of things – with a psychological grounding. As I studied these things, it became very, very clear to me through a series of profound experiences, that I really should be writing songs. I mean, I literally had visions. Songs came to me in dreams. I was inspired, at one point, just to pick up and drive my old car, which, at that time, had one hundred and fifty six thousand miles on it, across the desert with no map, in the general direction of Nashville. In Nashville I experienced an ever greater epiphany, and came back – that was about five years ago, and since then I've been entirely concentrating on songwriting. Not that I ever actually stopped writing songs – you asked earlier, about when I went to music school, and whether the music stopped – actually, not the writing of songs. I have always – I have continually written songs, my entire life. I had always just put it into a corner. I was aware that the songs were good, to tell you the truth. I don't want to sound conceited, but I was aware that the songs were very, very strong. I just felt – I had been brainwashed to believe that a career in music was only for people that had been like, sort of, born into it. And had connections. Or had lucked into it.

From the sounds of things, you had been writing for a couple of decades. Was there a fear of exposing your songs to public scrutiny.

Yeah, there was a great fear. One thing that inspired me as a writer – there used to be a show – it was a short-lived programme that ran here. A television show called **"The Road."** It started out with songwriters, but then it got kind of co-opted by the mainstream people. Mary Chapin Carpenter was on there once. She is such a fine songwriter. I wanted to be like that. It showed this songwriter community in Nashville that Mary Chapin Carpenter purportedly hung out with. I wanted to go meet those people. I was afraid to do it, and I had this like \$100.00 guitar and a few of the songs that I had written – but I was really afraid to go. It was a hot August day and I think I was a little affected by the heat, but as I walked along in Portland, I sort of asked my grandmother who has long since passed on – my maternal grandmother – if I should go to Nashville. It was almost as though I could hear her speaking to me saying *"Dave, you get in that car of yours and go to Nashville."* So I did. The next day I just packed up and I went.

Was this also a Kerouac styled journey of self-discovery.

Really, when I think about it, it's almost like a textbook Joseph Campbell journey. I mean, I met various characters along the road that helped me. Had various adventures and misadventures. I finally got there and I went to this place called Douglas Corner,

where Guy Clark recorded a live album not too long ago. It's a real songwriter's hangout in Nashville. Very good people go there. They let me get up and play at the Writers Night, simply because I had driven so far.

Surely it was more than just that.

Well, they didn't know my music at all. I just told them my story and the guy said *"Well, alright get up there and do a couple of songs."* I was up there in front of these great songwriters – I'd heard some really fine songwriters that night. My hands were shaking, I could barely hold the guitar. My voice was querulous and I kind of sounded like Tom Jones [sings with a wavering voice]. I sang "Grand Prairie, Texas Homesick Blues" and "Long Black Road into Tulsa Town." I was amazed that I got an extremely enthusiastic reception. After it was over, people came over and talked to me. That's the night I met Tom Weathington, the guy for whom I wrote the song "Elvis Presley" a year later. Tom came over and we just started talking about music. I had seen him play at The Bluebird Café, the night before – so it was cool that he came over and talked to me. I was terrified. Absolutely terrified. Then I came right back to Oregon.

How long were you in Nashville.

About a week.

So you felt validated by what had happened.

Very true. Exactly. I just felt totally, that I knew that I was on the right track – finally – for the first time in my life, I knew exactly what I was going to do. Three days later, I entered my first songwriting contest and won.

Which one was that.

This was a little local thing for the Portland Songwriters Association. They used to hold a contest once a month and you'd go there and play your songs – shortly after that, I won the Sisters Folk Festival, Songwriting Contest which has really made a very big difference in my life. I tell you, that is a great little Folk Festival. Not so little, any more. People should come out for that. I won the contest there, I guess, in 1995.

I believe you've been on the judging panel for the Sisters Songwriting Contest.

Yeah, for the next two years, they were kind enough to make me a judge. I'm a terrible songwriting judge. I like everything. What happens is, I see people get up on the stage and I know how they are feeling. You know what I mean? I hear this sort of light around all their words and their music, and maybe I'll listen to it the next day on a recording and I'll think *"Oh well, that wasn't really very good."* At the moment, I get real into their cause. I have a lot of trouble deciding – the first time I had to do it, there were two songwriters that I simply could not choose between. I had to make it a

tie, and another judge broke the tie. Those songwriters were Evan Brubaker – I really admire Evan's work – and the tie was broken in favour of another guy, Glenn MacPherson, who is also a good friend now. Glenn had more of a country sound, and this is more of an Americana festival. I thought they were both great. The next year, I had, like, five people tied for first place. The last guy that got up to play was Daryll Purpose, who fortunately, for me, blew everybody else away [laughs]. So Daryll won that year.

Tell us about the transition from being a bar musician, playing covers, to solo artist singing your own songs.

It's completely different. As a pianist, you put on a suit and go sit over in the corner. Sometimes they'll have you up on a stage. It's kind of anonymous and you're just the piano player, and you just play what people want. And hope that no one harasses you. Part of being a piano player, in a bar, or a restaurant, is to be a target for everybody's rage. It's easy in a way, because you know what you're in for. To get up and play songs that you've written, and you care about, and you actually love to sing – that takes something. Especially in my case, because I was a terrible singer when I started. My voice has steadily improved – I still don't consider myself much of a singer, but I've improved 400% or 500% since I started doing this in earnest five years ago.

After your Nashville trip how quickly did you go out and play on your own.

I immediately got out and started hitting the open mikes. I knew I had to do it. Terrified as I was of doing it. Of course, I got that big validation in Nashville. It was sort of like, once I'd done that it was easier for me to come back to Portland. I didn't feel that there was going to be the competition in Portland that there was in Nashville. There's a lot of good musicians in Portland, but it's not like Nashville [laughs].

How soon was it before you put a band together.

Well, I met this guy at a party – Dana Denton. He's a songwriter as well, and he had just put together a studio in his house. He wanted to record me, so I made my first CD "**Snake Handlin' Man**" in Dana's studio. This was about a month after I came back from Nashville. He really liked my songs but didn't realise how bad a singer I was. We worked on that thing every weekend for nine months before it was finally, even, halfway acceptable. Once I had that CD out, I had this best friend from Tai Chi called Eric Park, and Eric wanted to play music so I said, "*Well, hey man, I need an accordion player.*" Eric got an accordion in a garage sale, and we started working together. The woman that sings on "**Snake Handlin' Man**" joined our band. Little by little – then I met Tracy and the band got a whole lot better. We got a bass player, and

my friend Arlene Hale started playing drums. I tell you, we had fun with that band and formed the closest friendships. It was great, but it was also a problem because the band wasn't really very good – and Tracy and I didn't exactly know how to get out of the band, because we were so close to everybody in it and had such a good time playing. Eventually, the band just kind of just drifted away. I think it lasted in one form or another for about a year. It was just called Dave Carter. Gradually Tracy and I started playing more and more gigs. From the minute, Tracy and I started playing together – from the outset, I wanted to call it, Dave Carter and Tracy Grammer. She wouldn't do it. I don't know why, but she didn't want her name associated with mine for about a year [laughs]. Then, finally, she said "*Well, OK, we can call it Dave Carter with Tracy Grammer.*" Then things started going very well, and finally she was amenable to calling it, Dave Carter and Tracy Grammer. Now I'm happy it's both of us.

When did the band come to an end. The middle of 1996.

I guess. I don't know if we ever really formally disbanded. I mean, I guess technically, we're still together [laughs]. We just haven't played together in years. I think our last gig was at the Sisters Folk Festival in 1997.

The next summer you went down to Kerrville.

That's right.

Had you ever been there before.

I had dreamed of it. It was my ambition in life, to just be in the contest. That was a really nervous time for me, because I considered Kerrville to be – I mean, it was like a religion to me –

The Holy Grail.

That's exactly right. Very well put. In fact I'm going to start saying that [laughs]. Kerrville was the most important thing in my consciousness.

Was this because other writers had told you about it, or because you were aware of how the contest was held in high esteem.

I was aware of it. I'd read stuff about it. I had met – the second trip I made to Nashville – I played at the Bluebird Café at an open mike, and got a great response. I met Buddy Mondlock, who I'd seen on a television special about Peter, Paul and Mary, and I'd heard his song "The Kid." Buddy and Carol Elliott came up and talked to me after it. They really liked the songs that I played. We sat around and talked – I was so lucky to get to know them. They'd both been at Kerrville a lot. So I actually met somebody who had won at Kerrville – real Kerrvillians – it was so exciting to me, because I really liked Buddy and Carol. We've

stayed good friends since that day. We still spend time together whenever we can, at the Folk Alliance Conferences or whatever. It was just like a really big deal to me. I wanted to be like Buddy, who I think is one of greatest songwriters around. And Carol too – is a fine songwriter.

The first time I went to Kerrville was in 1986. I think Buddy won the contest in 1985, and he opened in 1986. I remember the first time I heard "The Kid" like it was yesterday. [ED. NOTE. Got that one wrong Arthur !! Research has proved that Buddy won the New Folk contest in 1987. Proving that age and memory play tricks, it was Darden Smith who opened the first night of the festival in my year of kerr-virginity. On my second visit to the Quiet Valley Ranch, circa 1989, Buddy opened the second night of the first weekend, supported by his school buddy Mike Lindauer [bass] and Laura Hall [piano]. Years later, Laura became the piano player on the American television version of "Whose Line Is It Anyway." Ed Morrow was right.]

He's great. I like that song that he and Tom Kimmel wrote – that newer song "Poetic Justice." What a song.

You didn't debut as a duo till 1997. Did you spend a lot of time practising together.

We played in coffehouses in Portland. That's what we did a lot of. We played these awful little fairs – I don't want to sound ungrateful, but – kind of craft fairs. Glorified craft fairs that they hold at various parks around town. And outside of town. We started to develop a little bit of a following – Tracy and me – sometimes the band would be with us. For a while it was Tracy and Eric and me. Eric is really a smart guy, and he was good on the accordion, but then he and his wife started having children.

So the road wasn't the place to be for Eric.

That's right. Tracy and I – we both wanted this so badly – and things kept going well enough that we didn't quite quit. We'd set goals for ourselves and would say - "Well, if we don't do this or don't do that we'll quit. I think we better back out of this, because it's too expensive. We need to get serious about life and all this stuff." Fortunately, you know, Tracy is brilliant – and we've worked really, really hard and things have continued to go sufficiently well that we just haven't quit [laughs].

When you won at Kerrville, did you meet my friend Toby [Roodman] from the Napa Valley Festival.

I think we might have met Toby at the Folk Alliance Conference in Memphis. Just kind of briefly, but we really got to know him better at Kerrville. That's when he got interested in our work. God, I was so green then, I didn't know what was going on. I didn't know who Toby was, I just thought he was a really nice guy. Later on, I found out that he wanted us to enter that Napa contest – which was harrowing. That was – the

quality of the people competing in that contest was just scary. Anne Gallup. George Wurzbach, was in that. A ton of people that I just thought were the finest songwriters in the world. Man, I remember that day.

Going back to Kerrville, I understand that you got a standing ovation after your performance. Was that in the heats or in the final.

Both times, we got the standing ovation.

And that's another form of scary, considering the one-hundred degree heat during the afternoon.

Oh yeah. Well, it is. It's scary, but gratifying. The first standing ovation – that was the amazing one. Also we were better. When we were in the heats we were better. I had mononucleosis the whole time, and I kept getting sicker and sicker. Our second set, when we came back – after we had gotten the award – our second set, I didn't think was as strong. We still got the stranding O, and I'm just so proud of it. I'll never forget it. We went to San Antonio to celebrate afterwards, and I wanted to get a tattoo that said "Kerrville New Folk Winner" – but the tattoo place was closed [laughs].

Like I said, only mad dogs and crazy folk music fans sit under the shade trees through the whole of the Contest Heats and Final. Those are the hardcore listeners who can really recognise a great song.

That's right. I just think Kerrville is the greatest thing in the world. I would have gone back last year to play at the campfires and hangout, but Tracy and I were broke. We had no money and we had offers of paying shows in our area, and we just had to stay here and play. I'm hoping it will be different this year. I'm hoping that I can find a way to get down to Kerrville – I've had people offer me jobs down there – if I'm trying to make myself out to be a folk music star, I shouldn't be telling you all this about not having any money. That's just where Tracy and I are right now. We're accruing fame – I mean we can go play anywhere in the country - in the U.S., just about – and people know who we are. We get a good crowd. We get airplay everywhere, but it has yet to translate into hard cash. We're still, just getting by.

The songs that you included on "Snake Handlin' Man" – what span of years do they cover in terms of when they were written.

I wrote all those songs in the year in which the album was recorded. Some of them, I was writing during the time we recorded the CD.

Yet you had been writing songs for the preceding two decades.

Something like that.

So have you got a catalogue with hundreds of songs.

Yeah. Of course, you know, the first efforts [laughs] were not so great. Now, I'm pretty consistent. Tracy and I have a lot of songs like – for **"Tanglewood Tree"** we had fifty songs that might have gone on the CD. We pared it down and pared it down, till we finally had – we don't like to put a lot of songs on a CD. We want it to seem fresh. We don't want people to have to hear our voices over the span of fourteen or fifteen, or even twenty songs. We tried to keep it to ten songs, but we had to put on the eleventh song. We just felt that it needed it. In fact we wanted to put twelve songs on, but when we made the CD, both of our voices were so shot that one of the songs we couldn't sing. We're hoping to put the song on the next one.

Will you ever re-record "Working For Jesus."

We talk about that a lot. I would like to put something from **"Snake Handlin' Man"** on all our ensuing CD's, because **"Snake Handlin' Man"** – there aren't going to be any more of them. Hence I would like to eventually re-record everything on **"Snake Handlin' Man."** Except, that is, for the title song, which I don't think is really that strong. I'm not that crazy about that song.

It comes across as a little frantic.

Yeah. It just doesn't go anywhere for me. Maybe I'll change my mind. We had a lot of requests to put **"Sarah Turn 'Round"** on the new CD. **"Red."** People are always asking us to do **"Red."** I don't know – maybe we will put out a double CD.

You said earlier that you cut "Snake Handlin' Man" soon after your first Nashville trip, you must have cut "When I Go" as soon as you came back from Kerrville.

Actually we had started **"When I Go."** I think we started it in, like – I believe it was the November or December before Kerrville. We started messing around with it. I don't think we had any useable tracks though, until right after we came back from Kerrville. Or maybe right before. No – I remember in April, we started getting a few useable tracks. That was a funny thing, that record. We never expected it to get national airplay. We never expected it to do what it did. We were just making something to sell at our gigs. We just had no idea that it was going to be as popular as it turned out to be. It was really almost like a fairy tale that thing. It was a lot because of Kerrville – a lot of folk DJ's heard us there and said **"If you ever get CD, give it to us. We'll play it."**

Which is why you're broke. All those freebies.

That's right. That's exactly right [laughs]. That's a big reason.

Why did you choose Tracy's kitchen, of all places, to cut the album. After all, you'd already done the studio album with Dana.

I really could not impose on Dana to do another record. He was beat after the first one. Dana and I are still great friends, but he really just didn't want to spend anymore of his weekends making another CD with Tracy and me. What we did, was we started buying used recording equipment. We made **"When I Go"** on a used A DAT machine, and got a bunch of other used stuff that sounds pretty good. I'm standing right by it, right now. I'm standing in Tracy's kitchen right next to our studio, which is basically just a pile of equipment on the floor [laughs].

So how did you block out the external sound. Egg boxes.

No. It was really hard to block out the noise. In fact, we couldn't because a big building burned down, not far from Tracy and for – it was a big event in Portland when this building burned down – and for months, helicopters would fly over at weird times. She lives not too far from the train tracks and we would just start the take over, when a big noise went by. We'd just do it again [laughs]. That's one reason it took so long.

I guess Red River Records, comes from an obvious source, considering your Texas roots.

That's right.

The Arlene Hale who plays on "Snake Handlin' Man" and also gets a dedication on the track "Hey Conductor" on your new album. Is she the romantic suspense novelist.

No, I didn't know there was an Arlene Hale. No kidding. I'll go look for her books. Maybe I'll give one to Arlene when I see her. Actually Arlene is a really good songwriter and singer, but she's kind of shy about performing. If I go to Kerrville in May, I'm dragging Arlene down there with me because I always want people to hear her and her work. I met – at that first songwriting contest I won, that's when I met Arlene and we became instant friends.

You mentioned Tom Weathington earlier, with reference to your song "Elvis Presley." At the beginning of this conversation you indicated that your mother was secret Elvis fan – I wondered if part of the song was written for her.

Absolutely. I'm always trying to – Elvis Presley is really important to me actually. I think he is really misunderstood and he's a big joke to people. Actually, he was a wonderful singer. I really loved the music that Elvis made, especially in his early days. I feel that

Is that because it was more roots driven at that time, opposed to the glitzy, schmaltzy pop material that came later.

Yeah, that's exactly right. I feel like –

But that's typical of any artistic career, where you start with a flourish. Eventually everything becomes a compromise.

That's right. Elvis had a hard road to hoe in life. People think that he had a lot of money and had everything he wanted - well, he did have a lot of money, but I think he was a very lonely man. You know he was really a mystic. Elvis was really an interesting person, and people will just laugh at you if you say this, but he really had quite a philosophical depth to him. He was cut off from it and really insulated from it by his handlers. Also, you know, my life is, in a way - I have these twin personalities of Elvis Presley and Bob Dylan, and I'm always trying to resolve those archetypes in myself - that song refers to Elvis as a Dylanesque sort of character. So anyway.

I noticed on "When I Go" that there are a lot of names of people - well known people - turn up in song titles and your lyrics. There's much less of that direction on "Tanglewood Tree." Was this intentional.

I just think it's the - actually, I never noticed that before. I appreciate you pointing that out, and I'll have to think about why that happened. I don't know why that is [laughs].

Did you really struggle to get Tracy to perform the lead vocal on "Katy and the Ghost Of Lost Love."

No. Not really. She was always pretty comfortable with doing "Kate." She's a kind of a shy person, in a way. More and more in the shows, I'm trying to make it 50/50, where I sing half the songs and she sings half of them. Of course you can see the progression on this new album.

Absolutely.

Live, it's even better than that. She's really -

There are certain things that Tracy does on "Tanglewood Tree" with her fiddle where she just nails your songs.

Yeah. I know. I love what she's doing. On the next CD, which we're already working on - the arrangements - I'm currently concluding some of the songs. She does a lot of really pyrotechnic stuff. And a lot of singing. It's going to be great. It's a lot easier for me, because usually on stage - or at least up till now, I've had to work so hard. I really like it when she can take over and be the star for a while, and I can just kind of hang out in the back and think about playing my guitar.

How did you get involved with the Greg Brown album "In Harmony." Had you met him on the road.

No. We didn't really know him or anything. I'd admired his work a lot. I think he's really one of the best

around. We had played a couple of gigs in Corvallis, Oregon where that project is taking place. We have a big following there. They thought it would be nice to do a big concert with Greg and have us open. We had opened for Gillian Welch down there already, and it had gone very well. We were real popular with the Folklore Society there and they decided they would hook us up doing that. After we had the concert all arranged, they decided that they wanted to make a CD of the show. I'm really happy that we were able to be of help to them - and it was great to get to know Greg a little bit - and hear him play live. I'd never even gotten to hear him live before. It's cool to say that I'm on a CD with Greg Brown. I love telling people that [laughs].

The deal with Signature Sounds for you new album, "Tanglewood Tree." Why did you choose Signature, or equally, why did Signature choose you since you and Tracy are their first non north-east coast act.

I don't know why they chose us. I know that Jim [Olsen] said, one reason was, that there had been this radio buzz about us. Jim Olsen is one of the people who run's Signature Sounds. He's got a lot of experience in radio. He liked us because he could see that we were doing songs that people were going to listen to on the radio. We wanted Signature - we had some other offers, really great offers in fact, some with record companies that we really had always wanted to be on - but we ended up choosing Signature because, we like every single person on their roster. We think that's really good, and because they just gave us complete artistic control. They let us produce it. They let us have input into every single thing that we wanted and didn't want on that CD. That to me is vital. The whole idea of having somebody else come in and try to make my songs sound good for me, I'm very suspicious of that. I've seen so many fine artists -

You can sometimes loose sight of what you are doing, working too close to a project, while a third, independent eye can be helpful.

Yeah, that's true. But this time it worked out [laughs]. We'd done alright with "When I Go" and I felt we could do better production wise with "Tanglewood Tree" since we would have some studio musicians to work with. And a bigger studio.

How many copies of "When I Go" have been sold to date.

I have no idea. Tracy will know that.

One thing that I will say about Signature Sounds, is that of all the independents, and remember they're only five years old, they definitely know what they are doing. A number of the bigger independent labels seem to have lost their way in the last few years. Philo, for instance, is nowhere near the powerhouse label that it once was.

And then you speak a few lines at the end of the track.

I'll just tell you what that is. Those are two quotes from Jimi Hendrix. One is "six turned out to be nine. I don't mind. I don't mind." And the other one is, "Who in your measly little world are you trying to prove that you're made out of gold and it just can't be so."

But you must have worked hard on that closing counterpoint, because it is such a piece of magic.

You know it was very natural. I just, intuitively, sort of knew what to put there. I mean, how it should sound. It was really – I don't know – it just seemed to be the thing to do at the time [laughs].

What for you, is "The Mountain." An unattainable perfection.

That's about – I had a mystical experience when I was 23 – someone close to me had died. My grandmother. I was spending a lot of time feeling like I had to solve the problem of death. At 23 I was just conceited enough to think that I could actually do that. I spent a lot of time meditating and fasting and stuff, and at one point when I was about to give up on the whole project, I had this experience where – I sort of experienced everything that had happened to me as a temporal illusion. It seemed to me that I had really stayed immobile at the same place forever. Since before I was born, and that I would after I died. All of this was like a big passing show. It really was a profound and powerful experience that changed a lot about my life. I've never forgotten it. That's what I'm thinking of as the mountain. Something that is just so, huge and incredibly, like, massive and unmoving. "The Mountain" is about how people try to come to the mountain – or what they do with bits and pieces of the mountain – or the different things that they do in order to attain unity – or the unitive state. The thing is, you don't really have to do anything because the mountain comes to you.

Is the story line in "Hey Conductor" based on a real life event. For instance, you talk about a train called "Pride of the Indian Nation." Was that a real train.

No. No. Actually Arlene Hale and I were coming out of The Taco Den in Shasta Lake, California. We were on our way from Portland down to the Napa Valley Folk Festival. As usual, I was trying to make Arlene go to Kerrville. I said, "You've gotta go to Kerrville. You've gotta go down there and play around those campfires." She said, "Well, I don't know how I'm going to get down there to Kerrville." She said, "I don't know, maybe I'll take the bus." I said, "Well, maybe there's a train." And at the same time we just had this idea where we both said "Hey, conductor, does this train go to Texas." It sounded like such a great song lyric to me I couldn't shake it from my mind. It's not the kind of song that Arlene would write. Her songs are more airy and stuff. I just kept thinking about it and

thinking about it, and thinking about it. So I started having these imaginings – these daydreams about a train. I thought it would be cool to write, just a song about a train that went from Northern Oklahoma down to San Antonio. It would be really fun to do that – actually, one big motivation for it is that Tracy is really good on the violin and I wanted her to play "Orange Blossom Special" at the concerts. So I thought, "Well, I'll write this song. I'll finish this song and we'll put "Orange Blossom Special," like, in the song." Because, you know, whenever people hear "Orange Blossom Special" they kind of go crazy and Tracy plays it really well. So, I wrote it for – I had all these different motives you know. I had this kind of dream about the train and how all these different people would get on and off. All that stuff. When we came to record it, we realised that the last thing the world needs is yet another recording of "Orange Blossom Special." Instead, what we did is, put quotations from famous songs about Oklahoma and Texas and trains in the thing. The first solo is "Oklahoma Hills" by Woody Guthrie, played on the banjo – I mean it's a take-off on that. The second solo Tracy plays "Wabash Cannonball" on the mandolin, while our dobro player plays "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry." The last one, when they pull into Texas and San Antonio, it's a two violin version of "San Antonio Rose." That's how we ended up doing it on the CD.

My figuring was that Guy Clark doesn't write up-tempo train songs, but you do.

[laughs].

You've already said that there is humour in "Hey, Conductor." Humour is also present in "Crocodile Man" in as much as Tracy sings the vocal, from a male viewpoint.

I wrote that song on the way back from my friend Eric Park's house. I was driving down Sandy Boulevard, here in Portland, and it was Christmas Eve. I was feeling all lonesome, driving home, and came to this big sign that said "Fantasy Tan." It was a place where you could go in and have a girl in a bikini helps you with your tanning. I thought "Oh, yeah." I was feeling sorry for myself and I thought "That's probably my life, Christmas Eve at the Fantasy Tan." I started, really hearing a Waylon Jennings kind of a song. I originally wrote it like that. I would sing it in this kind of like, deeper voice, but it just never worked for me. It was originally – I just felt it needed more like guts, or something. I thought about that and really went into the song. I haven't really mentioned, but a lot of songwriting for me is an exercise in going into trances and into these dream states – so I went in this thing, and I began to think that I wanted this edge, and I wanted this character to be really wild. I completely rewrote the whole song, so that this guy's name was the crocodile man and he travelled around with carnies [ED. NOTE. American version of our travelling fun

fairs] and he had this quasi-mystical beginning. I wanted it to also be like a Waylon Jennings song, in a way, only I wanted it to be Jungian. Of course, you can hear the Bo Diddley influence there too. There's a big African, like, influence in it. I wanted it to have this circle, where he leaves his home, but he comes back to the home – and in the home, there's like a tighter circle – The Hall of Mirrors – and he kind of spirals down into this Temple of Sin. He meets with the mother figure there. Well, as I wrote that – I mean, as I thought more and more about that – I thought "Well, great" – but what this song is really about is, this reptilian kind of goddess. As I thought about that, I thought "Oh" – and it just struck me "Tracy. Tracy's got to sing this. Tracy has to be the person that does this." It's so much better with her doing it, than when I'm doing it.

And there is a deliberate humour there.

Well, yeah. It's around the edges of the song – the humour, but it's also serious.

"Cat Eyed Willie" is almost like a traditional story song.

Yeah, I'm really – I have this – something I like to do with my songs from time to time is, I like to write in antique language. And with antique concepts. I like to see how far I can get myself into that space. I wanted to write a song that was bluegrassy, but I also wanted it to be dark.

It is, in its own way, a tragic song that spans two decades. The main character loses the love of her life in a card game, and then loses again twenty years later, when her only child – a son – simply drifts away from her.

Yeah, that's right. Yeah, exactly right. I'm so glad that you understand that song, because a lot of people say to me, "What's this thing about." [laughs] I'm glad to know that it can be followed.

Why did you decide to cut "Cowboy Singer" again.

Like I said before, I want to put one song from "Snake Handlin' Man" on each of my future CD's. Jim Olsen really loves that "Cowboy Singer" song. I thought, "Well, we'll start with that one right there."

Is there really a place where "The labels don't care what age you are, And the Martin's are cheaper."

[laughs]. I don't know if there's such a place.

The song works on two levels. You have the element of humour like the example I've just quoted. There's also a dark side, in terms of older male character telling the young girl that she's a country singer, but who could, for his own personal reasons, be lying.

All these songs are about illusion, and breaking through illusion. This is a guy whose – he's doesn't

know if his illusions are his own or hers. And even though he's aware that there's a lot of illusion at work, in the end he arrives at this truth – it's a direct truth that's not necessarily based on fact, at all. But it is a truth.

The one lyric that consistently throws me is in "Walking Away From Caroline," where you speak about "how she's a woman and how she's a man, and she's a gust of wind." What are we meant infer from that.

Well, this is a person who has all kinds of illusions about herself. A kind of a fragmented personality. And can only see in herself these conflicts and problems – the guy who is singing this song, however, really sees what's beautiful in her. Yet, at the same time, he himself is in a way, too well grounded to imagine that he loves her in the way that she would like him too.

I did conclude, that they were both lying, and possibly not telling each other the truth.

That's right. That's absolutely right. It's like he sees this beautiful person in her, but also she's a little bit too much trouble for him [laughs].

Where I mentioned on "When I Go" that a lot of the song titles or the song lyrics featured fictional and real-life characters. For instance, Elvis Presley and Lancelot. One thing that I noticed about "Tanglewood Tree" is that there are three song titles that start with the words, "Farewell To." Were they part of a suite.

For a while, I was just writing these farewell songs. I wrote them right in a row. We had not originally planned to put them all on the CD, but – of course, the first thing that one thinks is "Well, you shouldn't put three songs that start with the words "farewell to" on the same CD." It became evident to me that those were the songs that needed to go on the CD. The more I thought about it, the more I thought "Yeah, why not. Nobody else would do that. Let's do that." [laughs] But that's not why we put them on. They just happened to be the right ones to put on. "Farewell To Fiddler's Rim" – we didn't have any intention of putting that on the CD until the last minute.

You cut that one in Portland.

Yeah, right here in Tracy's kitchen.

You seem to be continually compared to Lyle Lovett, by the press Stateside.

I don't understand that.

Neither do I. My thoughts run to, you mostly wear a suit in your press photographs, but as far as the person in the suit is concerned, if we concentrate on your spiritual and mystical writing, Townes Van Zandt and Jimmie Dale Gilmore are far more accurate reference points.

casually divulges market secrets to his pharmacist in *Confession* ; *Abuelita* observes an Argentinean mother, whose son was one of the *disappeared* during the '70's, search the crowded streets for her missing grandchild ; a family of Bosnian refugees, in hiding and struggling to survive, ponder whether there really is a God in *You Stay Here* ; a couple visit their old neighbourhood and discover that the family who occupy their former home have cut down their beloved *Wisteria*. Where the latter quartet of cuts focus on the routine as well as the heart rending, *Transit* most surely hails for the theatre of the bizarre. A nun, on her way to supervise a prison choir practice, mends a tyre in the middle of the [New Jersey] Turnpike. As the Friday night traffic backs up, drivers indulge in vulgar expressions of road rage as they manoeuvre past her. No one stops to help. True to the spirit of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, and once they are past the sister of mercy, they drive off "like sheep to the slaughter" into an "angry sun right on the horizon." Meanwhile Sister Maria's choir of "Car-thieves and crack-dealers, mobsters and murderers" produce heavenly harmonies and hope that Hades will not be their final reward. If the latter is an example of Shindell with a twist, in the month and years to come, I'm certain that *The Grocer's Broom* will become known as the song of fives, with a lyric that features references to "five-thousand fathoms of blue" and "five-hundred songs." Forced into premature retirement by the financial greed of his landlord, the grocer reflects that, after thirty years, "I've earned these idle days." Included in this set is a cover of Dar Williams' *Calling The Moon*, and *My Love Will Follow You* penned by the Miller's, Buddy and Julie. By the way, let's not forget the Shindell instrumental *Merritt Parkway, 2am* that gently prefaces the aforementioned *Transit*. Other aspects of this release worthy of mention, is the reinvention of gatefold liner artwork by Charlie Hunter, Shindell's manager. In truth, the plastic liner and the accompanying booklet feature three, sepia tinted, gatefold pictures. The sessions for **Somewhere Near Paterson** were funded by Shindell, and that's not unusual for an independent artist. Signature, in turn, undertook to manufacture and promote the album via Koch Distribution. The unusual aspect of their contract is the revelation that, the record company and the performer will divide the resulting sales revenue equally. Welcome to reality and the new deal, **Somewhere Near Paterson**. Available from **Signature Sounds, P.O. Box 106, Whately, Massachusetts 01903, U.S.A.** [Web Site <http://www.signature-sounds.com>] and **Fish Records, P.O. Box 148, Shrewsbury SY3 5WQ.**

Mary McCaslin "Rain – The Lost Album" Bear Family

The length of the loss amounts to more than thirty years, with the eighteen tracks of *Rain* having been recorded between mid-April 1967 and mid-May of the following year. Capitol Records only issued one single from the sessions, teaming Lennon & McCartney's *Rain* with Michael Nesmith's *This All Happened Once Before*. Versions of *Rain* bookend this set, respectively, one without and one with strings. Historically the late Nik Venet, who produced these sessions, was concurrently working with The Stone Poneys [which featured Linda Ronstadt] and Hearts and Flowers. Two years later, Venet assisted John Stewart to record his eponymous solo debut, **California Bloodlines**. At this stage in her career, McCaslin's forte was that of an interpreter of material penned by, mostly, contemporary writers. Her landmark Philo album **Way Out West**, where she debuted eight of her own songs, lay five years in the future. In that regard, the contents of this recording are

comparable with, say, Judy Collins albums from the late sixties. Songs by Tom Paxton, Leonard Cohen, Tim Buckley, Hoyt Axton and Michael [Martin] Murphey as well as the latter's partnership with Boomer Castleman in the guise of [Travis] Lewis & [Boomer] Clark, are featured. For the majority of the sessions, the details of the musicians involved have vanished in the mists of time. The few known session players include Bernie Leadon [Hearts & Flowers, Dillard & Clark, Flying Burrito Brothers, Eagles], Larry Murray [Hearts & Flowers, and the producer of McCaslin's 1969 Barnaby label release **Goodnight Everybody**] and Douglas Dillard [The Dillards, Dillard & Clark]. On **Goodnight Everybody**, McCaslin reprised three of the **Rain** songs. Mary adopted an eclectic choice of material in her subsequent Philo/Mercury/Flying Fish recordings, with her own compositions standing alongside covers of pop and soul chart hits. Apart from The Beatles, the Gibb brothers, Maurice and Robin, and George Harrison compose the latter contingent on this recording. At no stage in her career could it be claimed that Mary was a contemporary artist. Even on **Rain**, the arrangements and her voice scream *traditional*. Once she and the late Jim Ringer formed a partnership, that style of presentation became even more pronounced. Although her lyrics often featured western themes, Mary remained a folk performer to the core. I have long considered Mary McCaslin to be the teacher, while Nanci Griffith, Iris DeMent, Kate Campbell and Lucy Kaplansky count among her former class alumni. Richard Weize is to be congratulated for unearthing this minor treasure, from that evolutionary period in recording history, when California was a fermenting melting pot, as the protagonists attempted to marry folk and country rhythms. Available from **Bear Family Records, PO Box 1154, D-27727 Hambergen, Germany.**

Slaid Cleaves "Broke Down" Philo Records [Import]

The fresh faced nineteen year old that I saw earn one of the six winning places at the 1992 Kerrville New Folk Songwriters contest, didn't impress me much. His work seemed derivative. Did we really deserve or need another Steve Earle ? Even his independent, solo debut, **Life's Other Side**, failed to spark any personal emotion. By 1997, and his third recording, Cleaves appeared to be ploughing a richer musical furrow. He appeared to have found his own voice. Where **No Angel Knows** showed promise, **Broke Down**, his sophomore effort for Rounder Records, finds him standing firmly on his own two feet, albeit supporting his own compositions, some co-written, with a number of covers. The Guthrie lyric *This Morning I Am Born Again* is supported by Slaid's melody, while *Key Chain*, which follows, first appeared on **Life's Other Side**. As for my earlier derivative comment, this set closes with a bluegrass-tinged flourish. *I Feel The Blues Moving In*, being a Del McCoury song. Now 27, the Woody Guthrie and Hank Williams recordings that Cleaves listened to in parent's attic, almost a decade ago, have been absorbed, dissected and analysed. The story song that Cleaves now pens, regale the listener with vignettes from the rural byways of North America. Vignettes peopled by world-weary characters, warts and all. Sandy Ross, the logging team supervisor, sacrifices his life to free a log-jam, on the Musquash River, in *Breakfast In Hell*, while Sherri and Billy who were once lovers, [each] contemplate the reasons why their relationship *Broke Down*. *One Good Year* finds the narrator, a drifter, dreams of better times and the opportunity to improve on merely breaking even again.

With **Broke Down**, Cleaves earns the right to be counted among *folk/country song scribes* such as Guy Clark, Ian Tyson and Ray Wylie Hubbard. Available in the UK from **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

Tim Harrison **"Tim Harrison"** Second Avenue Music [Import]

The material featured on solo album number five finds Harrison casting a backward glance at his somewhat sporadic, two decade long, recording career. The closing half of the final decade of the twentieth century was, in relative terms, a highly productive period; witnessing, as it did, the appearance of a trio of Harrison recordings. **The Stars Above** [1995] was followed two years later by the stunning **Bridges**. Now we have **Tim Harrison**, which closes with *In The Barroom Light*, the title song from Tim's 1985 sophomore effort. Produced by the late Stan Rogers and engineered by a young Daniel Lanois, *Train Going East*, which appears halfway through this collection, was the title of his 1979 debut album. Completing the pentad of songs, four of which are self-composed, that Harrison has chosen to revisit and reinterpret on his latest release, is the rhythmically upbeat *Two Hearts Beat In Galena*, a wedding gift for fellow tune-smith Jim Post; *What's Already Gone*, a tale of a relationship gone sour, and Billy Ed Wheeler's harrowing mining saga *Coal Tattoo*. The musical marriage that made **Bridges** such a winning combination, is best described as *maple leaf irish*. A principal contributor to that sound was the flute and whistle playing of Loretto Reid. Harrison's *In Dark Irish Kitchens*, dedicated to Loretto, was inspired by the generations of young musicians who first heard, and were inspired by, traditional music while sat in the kitchen beside a blazing peat fire. Reid's pennywhistle features prominently on this atmospheric track. Inspired by the writing of Nelson Mandela, *Healing Power* comes across as a mantra for peace and reconciliation, while *Philosophers' Dreams* is dedicated to those poets and writers, who, through the ages, have *kept the lamp lit* in order that the next generation may find the path. The conclusion should be obvious. Harrison has scored another winner by merging, with seamless ease, material old and new. Available from **Second Avenue Songs & Records, 12 Aldergrove Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M4C 1B2, Canada**.

Jimmie Dale Gilmore **"One Endless Night"** Windcharger/Rounder [Import]

Four years of silence [well, almost] from *the guru of the pure country inflection* has been a true endurance test. Way too long a duration for *existential country* addicts to bear. **"One Endless Night"** is, therefore, a mighty sweet and welcome relief. To date, and chronologically, the line-up has featured Joe Ely, Lloyd Maines, Steve Bruton, Emory Gordy Jr. and lastly T-Bone Burnett. Marking his debut, Jimmie shares the production chores, on this occasion with Nashville based *wunderkind* Buddy Miller. Since embarking on a solo recording career a dozen years back, Jimmie has never cluttered albums with his own compositions, to the exclusion of great songs by other scribes. Dipping into the catalogues of Lubbock boyhood chums such as Joe Ely, David Halley, Al Strehli, Butch Hancock and Jo Carol Pierce has been a tradition. Casting his net further afield, Gilmore even cut established country standards such as Hank Ssnr's "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry." **"One Endless Night,"** issued on Gilmore's own Windcharger label, finds him contributing only three original songs [including the *hidden* closing track]. His lowest input, on a solo album, to date.

What's more, two of them are collaborations. The opening, album title track, a tender ballad dedicated to a never-ending love comes complete with Emmylou Harris backing vocal, was co-written with former guitar picking sideman, David Hammond, while Hal Ketchum helped Jimmie pen "Blue Shadows." Rhythmically, the latter love ballad has a Hawaiian feel. The remaining decade of cuts [plus the hidden gem, and slap beat rocker "DFW" – which is destined to earn the same classic status as Jimmie's "Dallas"], includes a trio of tunes from writers who passed away during the closing decade of the twentieth century. There's Townes' "No Lonesome Tune," "Georgia Rose" from Walter Hyatt, and if you're going to cover a Dead anthem, it might as well be Garcia's "Ripple" [co-written with Robert Hunter]. Excluding the hidden cut, closing the disc are the two oldest songs in the collection. Steve Gillette and Tom Campbell wrote the, *normally*, traditional sounding "Darcy Farrow" [four decades ago] during in the summer of love. I use the word *normally* advisedly, since Gilmore breathes anthemic fire into the verses. The 1959 Bobby Darin pop chart hit "Mack the Knife" follows. It's no surprise that Butch Hancock comes off best with two cuts, "Banks of the Guadalupe" [a tribute to the river that meanders through the Texas Hill Country town of Kerrville] and "Ramblin' Man." Reading like a song-poet's *Who's Who*, the other contributors are Willis Alan Ramsey, John Hiatt and Jesse Winchester. Instead of the muddy sound that Miller often wraps around his own recordings, **"One Endless Night"** packs an *in your face*, crystal clear punch. The word pure always comes to mind when I think of Jimmie Dale Gilmore. Pure country voice. Pure country vision. Pure genius. What's more there's tons of it here.....this guy isn't a contender. He's still the champion.

Ellis Paul **"Live"** Philo [Import]

By way of a thumbnail précis, there are twenty-seven tracks on this two CD collection. There's a quartet of introductions and *road* stories – some delivered with humour – for example, the light aircraft pilot who turned out to be an obsessive Deadhead, three poems – including one that features a female tornado chaser, thirteen tunes from Paul's preceding four solo releases and seven brand new songs. Variety with colour, has always been Paul's trump card. Recorded at two venues, and four shows, spanning the period February 1998 till May of last year, Boston's ten time BMMIE folk award winner is assisted by Chris Trapper [of The Push Stars], Patty Griffin and his semi-regular road [folk'n'roll] buddies, Don Conoscenti and Chris Williams. And let's not forget the voice of black folk humour Stateside, Vince Gilbert. In the liner notes, Ellis visualises this collection as a *crossroad* in his career, with the intention that it underscores his recorded work to date – "a *resting place so that I can move on to whatever comes next*." There's no room for my *all time* Ellis favourite *King of 7th Avenue*, but the already familiar *Angel In Manhattan*, *3,000 Miles*, *All Things Being the Same* and *Autobiography of a Pistol* more than make up for that minor omission. There's even two versions of *the elder statesman* in this collection, *Conversation With a Ghost*, one featuring the voice of Ms Griffin. Although not credited on the liner, she also appears on *Last Call*. Among the septet of new songs, *Martyr's Lounge* features a heavenly cast of celebrities who prematurely deserted this mortal plane – "JFK, Joan of Arc, *Sit in the corner kissin' in the dark*, Marilyn Monroe, Jacques Cousteau, *Talk about the sharks they used to know*." Set in New York, *Maria's Beautiful Mess* is a tender

love song, while *Did Galileo Pray* ? a portrait of honesty, faith and truth in the face of [religious] persecution, draws the [undeniable] conclusion that, from age to age, history repeats itself. Paul's **Live** amounts to one hundred plus minutes of spontaneously woven magic. This double album is available from **Rounder Records Corp., One Camp Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140, U.S.A.**

Blaze Foley "Live At The Austin Outhouse" Lost Art Records [Import]

While visiting an elderly friend this earthly reality ceased for Blaze Foley, on 1st February 1989, when he was struck down by a speeding rifle bullet. Austin's self styled, *street troubadour* was only thirty-nine years old. The fantasy remains, for his supporters, that [one day] Foley's musical legacy will bring him recognition as one of the greatest Texas songwriters, ever. In the decade that has elapsed since his death, and much like Foley's long time friend and drinking buddy, the late Townes Van Zandt, Foley has been eulogised in song by his peers. For details, refer to *Drunken Angel* on Lucinda Williams' most recent album, *Blaze's Blues* on Townes' 1994 studio set **No Deeper Blue**, and Richard Dobson's *Foley* from his **Blue Collar Blues** collection. During last year, and mainly featuring Austin pickers and vocalists, two volumes of **In Tribute And Loving Memory** were released, featuring renditions of Foley compositions. A third volume is already rumoured to be in the pipeline. Such is the esteem in which Blaze Foley was, and is, held by those familiar with his music. Foley's greatest claim to fame, and probably the commercial peak of his career, came when Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard cut *If I Could Only Fly* for their 1987 duet album **Seashores Of Old Mexico**. The latter song is included in this collection. The summer of 1989, in Austin, witnessed the release of a twenty-one track, cassette version of this album. A decade on the CD version, fifty-five minutes in length, features one dozen of those songs, brings the promise of national and international distribution, and the opportunity for Foley to be heard by a wider audience. My 1989 contention that *Foley's talent was as bright and sharp as a new cut diamond* still holds true. This live recording can hardly be classified as high fidelity, and it is this simplicity that makes it a winner – Foley, his guitar, and some friends, present his folk/country tinged songs and some of his unique thoughts on life. Given to indulging in a lifestyle that mirrored Van Zandt's, nevertheless, his musical legacy mark him out as a caring human being. Available from **Lost Art Records, 609 West 18th Street, Suite E, Austin, Texas 78701, U.S.A.**

Andrew Calhoun "Where Blue Meets Blue" Waterbug [Import]

Andrew Calhoun's third album, for his visionary Waterbug collective, draws on compositions from a catalogue that he has assembled over the span of the last quarter of the twentieth century. **Phoenix Envy**, Calhoun's 1997 release, plumbed the same wellspring. It's worth noting that the oldest contributions here, *Reflections* and *Sea Of Snow* [circa 1973], are the surprisingly mature thoughts of a sixteen year old. The eleven verses of the latter work constitute, in truth, a rather sophisticated opus. John Prine's classic *Hello In There* and *Wild Birds* by Kate MacLeod, a fellow Waterbug artist, augment this nineteen song, sixty-eight minute long collection. Track by track the sound is *stripped to the bone*, with Andrew's acoustic guitar and voice only occasionally supplemented by fiddle, cello or a supporting vocal. Stylistically, Calhoun's career in folk music was founded, from the outset, upon his interpretation of

traditional Celtic and English folk music forms with *Vancouver* and *Baby-O* being the most obvious examples on this release, while those influences are more subtly incorporated into, for instance, the memorable album title cut. *Roads In Disrepair* can be subjectively, and literally, interpreted by its title, as well as on a number of personal and human levels. Here, it stands as one of many gems. Truth to tell, experiencing a concert performance by Andrew Calhoun will help the listener to fully understand and appreciate his often humorous, yet honest, take on day to day life. Available from **Waterbug UK, 2 Woodhouse, Shilbottle, Northumberland NE66 2HR or Waterbug, P.O. Box 6605, Evanston, Illinois 60204, U.S.A.** **NOTE.** It is with great regret that I have to report the closure of the Waterbug label. The contribution that Andrew Calhoun's label made to the field of independent, contemporary American folk music, in this corporate age, was nothing less than valiant. This was no magnificent obsession. It was a magnificent creative victory. In Andrew's own words, *"It was 7 years of slave labour for no pay and a large personal debt. So, on to the next thing, no regrets, really, but it's time I became a full time artist again."* Personally, I'd like to wish Andrew the best of everything on the next phase of his journey.

Chris Webster "Drive" Compass [Import]

West-coast chick, takes sabbatical from band – Mumbo Gumbo - heads east to Music City Tennessee, and cuts an honest and unpretentious, debut solo album. Featuring nine originals, plus covers penned by Randy Newman ["Real Emotional Girl"], Van Morrison ["Ball And Chain"] and Jennifer Berezan ["Turning of the Wheel"], the curiosity is that Webster's tunes were penned during the period 1987 through 1994, yet this is a 1999 release. A thought – the foregoing smacks of time spent unreleased in a vault ! The material is a cross genre mix of country, soul and swing. For emphasis on the slow blues "I'm Driving" and the harder "Shake On It" which follows, Webster enlisted the help of Memphis Horns, Wayne Jackson [trumpet] and Andrew Love [tenor saxophone]. Stripping the accompaniment to Matt Rollings' piano, and slowing to a ballad tempo, Webster's rendition of "Real Emotional Girl" is an exploration, in words, of female insecurity. Subjectively, Webster's [own] lyrics focus on relationship, particularly their failure and, in that context, the uncertainty of *forever*. Like a game of two halves, the initial handful of tunes are mostly up-tempo, while those that close out the set are slow-burnin' torch songs. Constructed in the mould of the traditional "10,000 Miles," the closing "Angel Choir" equates to seven minutes that approach heaven.....with Chris' sister Catherine [Cassie] providing the saintly soprano.

Kate Wolf "Weaver Of Visions : The Kate Wolf Anthology" Warner Bros./Rhino Records [Import]

In this age of shrinking artist rotas, this release begs the question - why would a major industry player suddenly become interested in the work of an independent artist, and for that matter a contemporary folk writer, one and a half decades after she passed away ? The story so far.....**Back Roads**, Kate's self released debut, appeared on her own Owl label in 1976. **Lines On The Paper** followed a year later. The Oakland based Kaleidoscope label brought Wolf's subsequent work to the attention of a wider audience, through the re-release of the foregoing works and a further quartet of original albums. Kate succumbed to that scourge, leukaemia, in late 1986. Prior to her death, she compiled the two CD retrospective, **Gold**

In California. Composing her first song at the dawn of the seventies, some 200 followed. Kate only officially recorded and released about one third of that output. *Live, home and never meant for release studio recordings*, appeared on a quartet of Wolf releases after her passing. Later, Kaleidoscope filed for bankruptcy and Rhino Records became the principle torchbearer for her aural legacy, aided by the careful stewardship of Kate's surviving family. Rhino is now a member of the Warner Bros family. June in Sebastopol, California has become a *time of gathering* for the Kate Wolf Memorial Music Festival, now in its fifth year. Nanci Griffith's 1993 Grammy winner **Other Voices, Other Rooms** opened with Kate's *Across The Great Divide*. Two years ago, Red House Records issued the various artists tribute **Treasures Left Behind : Remembering Kate Wolf**. Which brings us to **Weaver Of Visions : The Kate Wolf Anthology**. If 1986-96 witnessed the appearance of a handful of previously unheard Wolf compositions, this compilation furnishes the public domain with two more, *The Minstrel* and *Shadow Of A Life*. The latter song was written in memory of Apache medicine man Philip Cassadore. *Brother Warrior* and *Medicine Wheel*, also included here, and *Shadow Of A Life* find Kate examining one of her passions, Native American culture. The first disc opens with Kate's *Although I've Gone Away*, only available to date on **First Press**, a 1981 collection that featured the work of Sonoma County, California writers. Kate Wolf, the songwriter, was never a storyteller per se. Simplicity was her secret. Her words make contact with the listener through exploration of the human condition and the environment. That exploration focused on the landmarks on this earthly voyage – the shared vulnerability, spiritual beliefs and the triumph of survival. Anyone who fails to be moved by Kate's *Give Yourself To Love*, frankly, lacks human compassion, while the grass'n'blues tinged *Picture Puzzle*, was the closest Kate ever came to cutting an up-tempo song. Suffice to say Kate left us a momentous and memorable legacy. She was a beacon among the multitude, and it's hard not to speculate on *what might have been*, when one considers the strength of her final studio work **Poet's Hart**. Her flame was cruelly extinguished at the age of forty-four. This collection of some three dozen songs, includes eighteen of the twenty selections that Kate determined should constitute her epitaph, **Gold In California**. Completing and complementing the package, Larry Kelp's notes in the forty-four page, liner booklet, cleverly draw the reader into Kate's story by highlighting the songs in this retrospective and their contribution to her life. At almost double the length of **Gold In California**, with two previously unreleased tracks to boot, this release is laudable and timely, and will serve as an appetiser to the uninitiated and a carefully selected recollection to existing confidants. By the way, a Grammy nomination for this retrospective is not optional.

Tom Russell "Heart On A Sleeve" Edsel/Demon Records

The album that brought *Gallo Del Cielo*, Russell's angst filled tale of cock-fighting, to public attention in 1984 is back in circulation. The bonus cut, *The Dance*, previously appeared on the Round Tower retrospective **Beyond St. Olav's Gate**. During this era, Tom covered Bruce Springsteen tunes on the "B" side of his Scandinavian released singles. Unavailable elsewhere, as bonus tracks, they would have boosted the saleability of this reissue. As it stands, this is strictly for those Russell followers that need to "complete the collection." Fifteen years on, **Heart On A Sleeve** is still a fresh and vibrant collection delivered by a master song craftsman.

Session duo : Tracy

You're a Florida girl.

Well I was born there, and my mother's side of the family still lives there. When I was about three years old, my family hightailed it to California where my dad's parents are from. I grew up in Southern California.

Was it Homestead, Florida where you were born.

Yes. The tip of the Bermuda Triangle they say. I was born on the base in Homestead, Florida and we also lived in Miami. My father was in the Air Force.

Presumably, when he completed his service that's when you moved west.

That's right.

I know that your family settled in Orange County, but which town.

It was in Laguna Hills.

So Laguna Hills High School is in Laguna Hills.

It sure is.

Is Orange County near Los Angeles.

It's south of there. It's mostly suburbia to tell the truth. All I saw, growing up there, was a lot of development. My brother and I used to play in the fields a lot, when we were young. Catching lizards and stuff like that. Much to our dismay they paved over just about all those fields by the time I had reached Junior High. We saw a lot of shopping malls and condo complexes go up. Just pretty much the way all of America has gone.

As far as music in your home is concerned, I believe your mother played accordion.

She actually played when she was younger. About the time that she started to – I guess in her teenage years, she didn't think the accordion was such a cool thing after all, so she put it down. My dad was a guitar player and he played for us all through my childhood. He had an electric guitar and a lap steel guitar and he would play for us at night. He'd plug into his little amp and play things like "House Of The Rising Sun" which was really popular at the time. He had these Neil Diamond and Willie Nelson songbooks and I would learn the songs along with him, and start making up harmonies, when I was pretty young.

How old were you when you first picked up an instrument.

Well, there's a picture of me holding a guitar when I was about three. That's probably the earliest, although

I wasn't really trained on it. I started noodling around with the guitar when I was really young, but started training on the violin when I was nine.

Did your parents buy you the violin.

There was a neighbour – I was involved in musical things at school. I was in the chorus and I was getting parts in operettas – in little Gilbert and Sullivan things. They saw that I had some kind of musical talent and they wanted to encourage it. There was a woman down the street who played with the Long Beach Symphony and she had a spare violin that fitted me. She just loaned it to us for a while. My parents got me some private lessons. Then I started playing in the school orchestra, and pretty much the rest is history.

Did you start to pick up other instruments after a while.

Yeah. Well the way it worked is, I played violin up through High School. I did very well with it and I was leading orchestras – community orchestras and the High School Orchestra. Many different kinds of things. Then, when I went to College, I just wasn't – for some reason it just kind of fell out of favour with me. I just didn't feel like playing anymore. Life was busy and I was seeing new things and doing new things and I just put it down. Also, I had auditioned for a chamber group at Berkeley and I didn't get in. I think I was a little depressed. I just set the violin aside for a while. What happened was, it took me a long time to get my degree at Berkeley because it was kind of a cycle of, working a little bit to get some money together and then going to back to school. I'd go for a semester, then I'd take a semester off and work, and then go back again. During one of those in-between periods, when I wasn't going to school, I went out to this town called Modesto that is about 80 miles inland from Berkeley where my dad was living. He had this friend named Curtis Coleman, who was with the New Christy Minstrels for a short period during the sixties. He was doing singer/songwriter gigs around Modesto, at little coffee-houses. My dad said "You really got to go hear this Curtis guy, he's great. He's a really good friend of mine and I think you'd like him." My brother and I – my brother was living out there at the time too – we would go watch Curtis, and we were entranced by what he was doing. He was singing sort of a James Taylor type vocal, and playing a guitar. There was something about this intimate live performance that moved us so much, that we went to every single show. He played four nights a week around town. We went every night. We were always there.

If you were that regular, I guess he began to pick you out in an audience.

Exactly. I was sitting there one night, and there was a song that summer that was really popular called "More Than Words." I can't remember the name of the group that did it [ED. NOTE. The song was included on the

1990 Extreme album "Pornograffitti." The song was a US #1 pop single during 1991]. It was a duet, and it had a really moving harmony part. People would always call out for the song and Curtis would say "I don't know that song. I'm sorry." He knew that I knew it, so one day he just says "I don't know that song, but Tracy does. Do we want to hear Tracy get up and sing it?" I was mortified. I was going, "No. No. No." [laughs]. He got me up there to sing, and it was terrifying and it was terrible. Obviously there was something about it that I really enjoyed, because I went home right after that I said to my dad "Let me have your guitar, so that I can learn some things on it." Then I started getting the violin out again and gradually got back into music thanks to Curtis pulling me out of the dark there.

Was Curtis doing original songs as well as covers.

It was about half-and-half. He had some originals and then he was doing like, James Taylor songs and stuff from the sixties. This was in 1994.

Going back to the orchestras that you were in during your school years, I believe that you were in the All Southern California Orchestra. Was that a major state school orchestra.

I think I was pretty much the youngest person in that one. That was the All Southern California Junior High School Honour Orchestra. I was in that in, I think it was, the sixth grade. It was mostly for seventh, eighth and ninth graders. That was the only year that I did that, but it was a really good thing for me to do. I used to go to these music camps up at Arrowbear – it's up in the mountains. And that helped a lot too. To get the encouragement and to kind of further my development.

Did the school orchestras that you were in ever go touring around California, or travel to other parts of the States.

No, they were really kind of focused on one big concert. We'd practice and practice for a couple of months and then we'd have our big thing and it was over [laughs].

This was always classical music.

Yeah.

As a teenager, what music did you listen to. Classical music.

No. My family listened to country music, not really bluegrass music. Just what was on the radio. I listened to a lot of pop music, like my friends did at the time. Also in school, being a part of the school orchestra means that you take part in a lot of musicals. I did some musicals when I was really young, as a singer and an actor onstage, then I got a

chance to be in the pit during my High School years. I think that, actually, that's where some of my most valuable experiences come from – working on those school musicals. You have to develop a sensitivity to what the actors are doing onstage. When they are going to sing, and when they are going to breathe, and when you should come in, and how loud you should be so that you don't drown them out. I think that was probably one of the most influential things that I did. Some of the songs that I love the best actually come from musicals.

What musicals did you do when you were younger.

When I was really young, I used to always get the guys part, because I had a really loud voice [laughs]. I got to be the Duke of Plaza Toro in **"The Gondoliers."** In the other one, I was the Modern Major General [ED. NOTE. Major-General Stanley in **"The Pirates Of Penzance"**]. I would get these ridiculous parts. This would have been when I was in third grade up to fifth grade.

Gilbert and Sullivan's a little sophisticated for a pre-teen.

[laughs] It was fun. From an early age, I just loved those things because – the songs are so silly, in a way. The songs I had to sing were just ridiculous. When we finally came back to do more musicals in High School, we were doing things like **"Oklahoma"** and **"Fiddler On The Roof."** **"Guys And Dolls."** I was in the pit by then, and it was always a struggle for me because I really wanted to be onstage. I had loved being onstage so much when I was younger, but I was also leading the orchestra at the time, so I felt like it would serve the whole project better if I just stayed in the pit. And helped everyone else along.

The eight years where you didn't play music, when you were in Berkeley, did you even stop listening to music.

Well, you know, I was listening to country music. In the times that I wasn't going to school – there were a couple of periods where I lived in Modesto. For part of that time, I kept my job in Berkeley, so I would do this eighty-mile commute, each way, and I would listen to country music radio. I got heavily into country music. The Judds. Katy Mattea. Mary Chapin Carpenter. People like that. I would sing for the entire eighty miles – gradually, towards the end of that periods I started to do – not open mikes, but karaoke in Modesto [laughs]. Just because there was nothing else to do in Modesto, except karaoke and go listen to Curtis sing. My brother and I would go do this, and always get a really good response. I felt like somehow, it must be useful for me to do this – actually, it did help me get over a lot of stage fright when the time came.

Is your brother talented, musically.

He [laughs] - my brother's kind of funny. A psychic, I think – my brother likes to see psychics and tarot card readers and people like that. A psychic once told him that, around the time he was thirty, he was going to be about as famous as Garth Brooks for his country music singing. My brother is now thirty [laughs], and he can't hold a tune to save his life. It's so funny, because he held to this for a long time – he has a deep appreciation for music, but he's not – I wouldn't call him a musical person. He tried several instruments. The trumpet. The drums and the violin. He didn't really stick with anything.

Is he younger than you.

Jim's a year and a month younger.

When it came time for college, why did you choose to study English Literature and Anthropology, as opposed to say, Music.

Yeah, I know. Well, first, I think I didn't choose music because of that experience I had auditioning for the chamber group and not getting in. I was really disheartened by that. Also, I think I was just too scared to do music. I felt during that initial audition, the woman really criticised my bow arm. She said, *"Your vibrato's nice in your left hand, but your right hand, what's going on? How long has it been since you've had lessons?"* Something like that. I was really crushed after that audition. I took a couple of music classes – but for whatever reason, it just didn't seem like the right time to be doing it. I toiled around with a lot of different things. I started off pursuing psychology, then moved on to biology. All the while, I was taking classes in Literature because that's the thing I loved the most really.

Did you read a lot as a child.

Yes, I read a lot. I read from early on. I wasn't really an outgoing kid. I wasn't the kind of kid you'd find in the middle of the street, late at night, throwing a ball around. I was more sort of – like, introverted. Plus, I had really great English Professors in High School. So I was really inspired. Sort of toyed with the idea of being a writer. Thought I might want to be a writer, so I thought the best way to do it was read who is great and find out how they did it. I had a special affection for Shakespeare, and for Native American Literature. At the time, some of our required classes – Physical Anthropology somehow fitted into the required course options that we had to take. I really loved it. Really got into the whole study of bones and archaeology and all this – again, because I'd had some exposure to it as a kid. They took us out on fossil digs and we'd get out our screwdrivers and out paintbrushes and find little trilobites, or whatever you find, in the rocks around Laguna Hills. Gradually, through a combination of all these things I ended up – I found that my studies in Native American Literature were really complimenting

my Anthropology studies a lot. You learn about where the people lived, and how they lived, and the stories they told. It just worked for me as a combination of subjects to study.

How long did you work with Curtis Coleman.

That was just one summer. At the end of that summer he moved to the East Coast – he met a woman out there and was determined to go and make the relationship work. He just took off [laughs]. That was in the summer of 1993.

I believe that you also taught English at one stage.

My aunt is a Professor of Psychology in Tallahassee, Florida and she arranges this trip, every summer, for eight teachers to travel to Taiwan and teach English as a second language at an all-girl's school there. After I got my degree – because you had to have a degree, in order to be able to do this – she invited me to go. It was really just one of the greatest things I ever did in my life. Really rewarding. Just getting to travel to a different country was a big, big deal for me.

Was that the first time you had been outside the U.S. mainland.

Well, I'd been to Mexico, because that's real close by Southern California. I had never taken one of those really long plane trips, you know, and gone to a place where nobody speaks the English language. All they say is "Hello" and "How are you" and "Thank you" [laughs]. They live completely differently from how we live here. It was just – it was really an eye opener. This was in the summer of 1995. I took my guitar to Taiwan, and on the last day of the five-week intensive course, I led a gymnasium full of two-hundred sentimental, sobbing Chinese girls in "That's What Friends Are For." Everyone was so emotional -- the attachments were fast and strong.

Were you working in San Francisco before you decided to move to Portland. And for that matter, why Portland.

[laughs] Actually, I was working at the university. Finally, at some point in my college career I got smart and realised that if you're a staff member of the university, you get a huge discount on your tuition fees. I had been working as a student in the summer session's office. A full-time position came up and I took it. I had a really great job and was finishing up school – but, you know, I had been in Berkeley almost ten years at this point and was really itching for a change. Especially, right after I got my degree. I still wanted to go somewhere. A friend of mine had moved to Portland and invited me to come visit. It was such a breath of fresh air. It was clean. It was, a well-organised city. It was very lush, you know – we went cross-country skiing, which is something, I'd never done before. I just thought it was the greatest thing in the world. Thought I would do it all the time if I moved

here, which – I've never done it again [laughs]. This is my fourth year and I have never once gone skiing, since I moved here. I went, like, six times before I moved here. It's classic. Also, I haven't had a car since about 1995, so I needed a place that would be foot and bike friendly as well, and had good public transportation. And Portland does. Just for a lot of reasons – the cost of living was low. It looked like I could get a job here pretty easily, so I just came up.

Had you been playing music in San Francisco?

There was a short period of time, when I was in a band called Juicy. It was sort of an Electro-pop band. Let's see – it was a four-piece. We were good - I thought we were good, but the problem was there were a couple of different songwriters in the band and everybody wanted to play their own songs, so we never really had a cohesive sound. We could conceivably play everybody's songs – you know what I mean, but it didn't really quite work. We lasted for about one summer, and maybe half a dozen gigs, and then the band fell apart. We played in San Francisco and Berkeley and Oakland. We cut a demo, at the time, and I think that's when I really dived back into music seriously and thought that this might be something I'd want to do. Something about being in the studio really inspired me. I just loved all the possibilities. You know, the whole mixing board. I was just fascinated by it. All those knobs, you know. I hoped that when I moved to Portland, I would meet someone to play music with. Of course, as it turned out I did.

When you first moved to Portland, I believe you played with a musician called Dave Noble.

That's right. Yeah. He's a songwriter. He's an excellent songwriter actually, and I wish he would finish some songs and put them out there. He's a phenomenal talent that nobody knows about. We worked as a duo. He also had a duo with another girl who was singer. There were a couple of times where we all played together. At the time, he was kind of unsteady about what his format should be. I didn't really like what he wanted me to do – just the kind of violin that he wanted, wasn't something that was really in me. He wanted stuff that was sort of freaky and psychedelic and strange. He practically wanted me to do acrobatics onstage, while playing the violin [laughs]. I thought, "I don't think so." I have to give him credit. He's the one who told me to listen to Dave Carter. It was on a night that I had played with Dave Noble that I met Dave Carter, and the whole course of events changed.

How long had you been in Portland at that stage.

I met Dave Carter, like, two months after I got here. I moved here in January 1996.

How soon after that did you begin working with Dave Carter.

He called me, soon after we met and proposed that I come over and try to play the violin solo to "Kate And The Ghost Of Lost Love" with the band. He had another woman singing with him at the time, and our friend Eric [Park] was in the band, which I think Dave, told you about earlier. I went over to Susan's house and we all sat around and Dave had some sheet music there for me. I read it and it was easy, so it sounded good [laughs]. Everybody was just thrilled. We were so excited, and so at that point I was pretty much in the band. It was the easiest audition one could possibly asked for. It was good chemistry with everybody in the band, and just fun from the get go.

The Susan that you mention is Susan Martin.

That's right.

And then the band broke up.

What happened was – Susan's life was getting increasingly complicated, because her boyfriend was moving in and they were working on their house together. She was teaching – she's a math tutor. Eric's life was getting increasingly complicated, because his wife was pregnant and his job responsibilities were escalating. Everybody just started having, sort of, other things to do besides the music. There was a little party that we were all supposed to play one night, and Susan couldn't make it and Eric couldn't make it – Dave and I were the only ones who could do it. I had not sung with Dave at this point. It was, like, the day before the show, and Dave says "Do you sing?" I said, "Well, yeah." I had been waiting for months to be offered the opportunity to sing.

Why had you not spoken up.

Because Susan was doing a fine job of it. I felt like I was holding down my end, and I knew Dave wasn't into the three-part harmony thing. He said, "Do you think you can learn these harmonies" and I said "Well, let's try it." Really, I already knew the harmonies, because I had been listening to Susan do them. Dave was – he was floored. He thought it was a miracle. It wasn't really a miracle, but he thought it was. From that point on – then it really strengthened – we had this duo thing. As other people fell away, it didn't really detract from the music or anything. In fact, there was a time when we had a full five-piece band and it was just – the songs were getting totally lost, because there was just too much going on. You couldn't hear those wonderful lyrics, and it was criminal.

That night in February when you heard Dave sing for the first time, and you therefore heard his songs for the first time, do you remember what you thought that night.

What I remember is that Dave Noble elbowed me right before Dave Carter went on. Dave Carter had a reputation for being late for everything. He comes rushing in – people were saying, "Where's Dave ? Where's Dave ?" – and he comes in at the last minute, because he was giving piano lessons at the time. When he's done with doing that, he rushes over to The Buffalo Gap for this thing, and he's the last guy to play. I see him kind of shuffling through the crowd, trying to get to the front so he can set up. Dave Noble elbows me and says, "You've got to hear this guy. He sounds like Lyle Lovett. He's awesome." I said "Oh well, that's cool," because I grew up on country music and I was still listening to a lot of country music at that time. In particular, Lyle Lovett. I was really intrigued, and so Dave gets up there to sing and the first thing I notice is that the whole room went, just, totally quiet. I mean there was a certain reverence that was palpable. It was really kind of amazing. Dave was up there apologising for taking up everybody's time. He's saying "I'm sorry y'all, I'll be done in a minute and I'm just going to play one or two songs and then I'll be done and out of your hair." He was so charming. He got up there and played, I think, "Snake Handlin' Man" and "Gun Metal Eyes." Susan sang "Gun Metal Eyes" with him that night. When I saw Susan and Dave play together, it's like, I had a moment where – the room might have been quiet, but it got even quieter just for me personally, when I realised exactly what I wanted to do with my life. I wanted to play music – exactly like they were playing. I wanted to play with that guy. I didn't know how that would happen, and it's the kind of thought that you don't really let yourself have. You know, this is just like a dream come true.

But the dream has turned into a nightmare now, hasn't it [laughs].

[laughs] And so I just thought "Oh, that is what I want to do. That, is what I want to do." I remember feeling kind of hot for a moment, like "I can't believe that this is happening. This is what I really want to do." I was a shy person, so I wasn't going to go introduce myself to Dave Carter and ask if he needed a violin player. I was shuffling out the door and he was coming around the other way – there's two ways to get out of The Buffalo Gap and they both converge at the door. We met at the door and I was holding the violin in its case. He looks down and he says, "Oh, I see you play the violin." I said "Yeah." He says, "We should play music sometime." I said, "Oh, that would be great" and didn't think it would really happen. Obviously it did, and it's been great ever since. I mean, Dave Noble was history after that night [laughs]. It was pretty magical. I have to say that.

Did you rehearse a lot before you starting playing as a duo on a regular basis.

It really just evolved from the band. I think we recognised pretty early on that we had a really good chemistry and – I mentioned that – I think there are two reasons that I'm a pretty good side-person. One of them is the musical thing that I talked about before. Working in those musicals at school. The other one is that I have alcoholics in my family. You have to watch these people very carefully, to keep out of trouble with them. I think a combination of these two things makes me – really intuitive, for one, and just able to read people and where they're going with things, for two. Very early on, it was obvious that I could read Dave really well, for whatever reason. He was really happy with the sounds that we were making – our voices were blending well, and the music was blending – by the time the band did fall away, it was almost natural. It was almost like Fall leaves coming down – and then you're just left with the essence of the tree, and that was fine.

Dave said earlier that he wanted to call the duo Dave Carter and Tracy Grammer from the outset, instead of Dave Carter with Tracy Grammer, but that you resisted the idea.

Well, the reason – I guess when I first saw Dave play, I had just listened to a whole evening's worth of people singing about themselves. Mostly. And then, here comes a guy and he's singing, and these words are like poetry, but it's country poetry. And they're not stupid. There's something really magical happening with the lyrics. They're kind of mystical. They're really informed. They're really poetic. And I thought that people needed to recognise this writer. I just didn't feel when we first started out, that really, any of us in the band should have been mentioned. It just should have been Dave Carter, because these were his songs. And his stories. He was fronting the band, and I just thought that's how it should be. When we whittled down to a duo, I still wanted it to be Dave Carter, I guess, because he wrote the songs. I wanted him to get the credit and be recognised. To this day, there's a review in **Sing Out**, where they give me co-writing credit for "**When I Go**" and it just makes me cringe. That's the kind of thing I didn't want to happen. That's the reason I was hesitant to put my name on the project – because I really wanted it to be known that these are Dave Carter songs.

I'm surprised that a magazine of the stature of Sing Out would foul up on such a basic thing as song credits. It's pretty obvious from the liner and the disc, who wrote the songs.

I know. I was just mortified. I mean it kind of – anyway – they'll fix it next month, when they print a song of Dave's in their next issue.

What did you think about all the songwriting competitions that Dave started entering.

It was a funny thing, because we would – Dave and I had totally different takes on how things would go. I always thought that he would win. I just assumed that he would win. I figured, I had heard enough people. I knew he was brilliant – I knew he was doing something really different. I figured it was a matter of time – but Dave wasn't sure of anything at all. We went to the Wildflower Festival – I guess that's the first one that we did as a duo. It was very expensive to get there. We had to fly to Texas and the prize money is never a lot for these things. If you lose, you lose big time. You lose a lot of money getting there, and hanging out and stuff. We played and – I guess, you hear a couple of people play before you and I just knew – I already knew that something really good was going to happen for Dave, as a result of entering these things. After we were done at the Wildflower contest, Kate Wallace came up to us. She lives in Nashville. She said that she had not been so blown away, since the first time she heard Gillian Welch and David Rawlings play, and that if we didn't win she was going to eat her hat. That's what she told me [laughs]. I had been doing some research on the Internet, about places to play and what these folk festivals were all about, because I never went to them as a kid. I didn't know anything about folk festivals until I got with Dave, and you know – all of a sudden I started meeting these people whose names I had seen [listed on the internet] on the mainstage, at this festival or that festival. I started to realise that we were coming into the company of some really great people. I thought, "*Well, you know, if these people hear Dave's songs then something really great is going to happen. This will be the test.*" And so, he won the Wildflower thing and he was totally stunned. Then we got home and found out he was a finalist at Kerrville. You know this business is hard – I mean it's financially draining in the beginning. It's all investment. In fact, to this day, it's still investment for us. And so, we would be considering going to these contests – we find out we got into Kerrville New Folk – OK, we're finalists for that, but we're also getting really poor. Dave says, "*If we don't win this, I'm hanging it up. If we don't win this, it's over. I'm not doing any more contests. I'm not going out on the road. I'm just not going to do anything else. I've just had it. This is too much to bear.*" So we go to Kerrville and I heard him telling you about the standing ovations [laughs]. Needless to say, he won. So we go home again and it kind of enthralls you with a certain – you get excited.

You said that you had never been to folk festivals when you were younger, and then you went to Wildflower and then Kerrville. What did you think of Kerrville.

Oh well, gosh what a shock. I didn't know what to expect, at all. I heard about the campfires and I heard that it was kind of rugged, you know – I knew there would be a lot of music going on. I was just blown away. And not being a real extroverted person, I found myself – I didn't say a lot. I observed a lot. I met a lot

of people, but mostly, I just watched to see what was going on. Just tried to soak it all up. It was really – also I have to say, I felt a little weird because I'm not really a songwriter – I mean, I've started a bunch of songs, but I haven't finished any. In a way, I didn't have anything to share around the campfires, except what I could add to Dave's songs. I don't know, I think it's a little bit different for a side-person to be there, than a songwriter.

I loved your word, rugged. I thought the word basic, would be closer to the mark.

[laughs] It was good to be there, but I was glad we were New Folk finalists, because it meant we got to use the good showers.

I think you nailed my inference, since there are slight difference between the two blocks. So the two of you arrived back in Portland and got really fired up in Tracy's kitchen.

We did. Yeah. I think we had already started to lay some stuff down here, but we had such a positive response at Kerrville – and people were saying, “Do you guys have a CD?” – and we were thinking, “Oh gosh, we better make one. It seems like we might be able to sell a few.” It would also be a way to share Dave's songs, because people wanted to learn them. Like “The River Where She Sleeps” and “When I Go.” We set ourselves to recording and it was gruelling. It lasted for nine months, I think, all told. I think what we came out with was good. Really good. And really sounded like us. I wasn't sure what we'd use the CD for, but I thought one thing we needed was a good demo. I was really determined that the CD should sound just like we sound when we play. We didn't add anything to it, except for Eric – and just a tiny bit of bass on a couple of songs.

Dave said earlier, that at one stage there were a lot of helicopters flying around. It must have taken some patience to wait, so that their sound didn't seep into the tracks.

Luckily, I live in a pretty quiet part of town. There was a period of time when they changed the flight patterns over my house, so all of a sudden I was getting aeroplanes fly over when I never had any before. Then we had that big fire, that I think Dave mentioned earlier – news choppers, every two seconds, came zooming by. It was hard, but it wasn't impossible. What happened with us – because it was just the two of us – is we got increasingly fixated on the details of our performance. We became increasingly critical. Pretty soon, nothing sounded good to us. We would sing things a hundred times before we got it to where we thought it was passable. To this day, there are things on the CD that neither of us can listen to, because we think it's awful.

I asked Dave if he had to struggle to get you to sing “Kate”

Well, I just think it's a beautiful song and I feel lucky to get to sing it. I just hope that when I sing it – because other people have sung it with him – I just hope that I do it justice. And that I sound like the person that's meant to sing it. You know what I mean – like I'm singing it in that person's voice – whoever that is.

I believe that you were involved in setting up the artwork for “When I Go.” Is the staircase, a painting or a photograph. I can't tell.

It's actually a photograph. We have a really good friend named Kathleen Williams, who is an editorial photographer. She goes around and does all kinds of shoots, and we told her what the music was like and what kind of images we were looking for. We knew we had kind of a South-West sound and wanted to do something like that – something a little bit dusty, a little bit country maybe – without being too obvious. She prepared a slide show for us and we went over to her apartment and just flipped through, probably, 100 to 150 slides until we found what we were looking for. She shot all the pictures – including the one on the inside of the liner with that interior, kind of neglected looking, space.

Who is Hollis Taylor.

She was my fiddle teacher for a while here in Portland. She is a person – I don't really know how I hooked up with her exactly. She might have been recommended to me by someone here in town. She's a person who is – I know what it was – I was shopping for fiddle books as I'm classically trained, and I realised that if I was going to do Dave's music justice I'd better learn something about the fiddle. So that I could at least fake it [laughs]. I came across a book by Hollis Taylor in a local music store. It was the kind of thing you'd make at a local copy shop, with that coil binding. Just made of copies really, with her hand written notes and everything. I read her biography on the inside, and it said that she was right here in Portland, that she had been classically trained and had also played a lot of jazz fiddle. She had led various orchestras throughout the country and had, just, a real broad range of experience. I thought “Well, this just the kind of person that I would want to teach me.” What I really wanted to know was – well, first how to fix my lousy bow arm that that person had complained about so long ago. Or, find out if there really was a problem. Then I wanted to find out, if I wanted to sound like a fiddle player, what I needed to do. And if I wanted to sound like a Celtic fiddle player, what I needed to do. If I wanted it to be sort of jazzy, what did that mean. I just wanted someone to help me with making those translations. I studied with Hollis, I think that was for about six months. It really made a

huge difference in my playing. I think this would have been around 1997.

When are we going to hear a Tracy Grammer song.

Well, I'll tell you when. As soon as I don't have to do the booking anymore and I have some time to write [laughs].

That's an easy get out [laughs].

I don't know though. It's on the horizon. We have some possibilities shaping up, so life is good.

There's been a couple of well-known musical Grammer's in the past. Were they relations. Dave mentioned The Limelighters earlier, and, of course, Red Grammer used to be their lead singer.

I didn't know that. I'm not really steeped in music history. People never call us by our last names though. They always say Dave & Tracy. I saw Billy Grammer's picture in Nashville, at the Country Music Hall of Fame, I think. I remember looking at him very closely – just to see if there was any possible resemblance. Unfortunately, I don't think there is. One family member on my grandmother's side – the last name was Fortin, and he played in a band with Lawrence Welk. He played trumpet and violin. So I'm thinking, maybe my violin comes down from him. That's it in terms of people in show biz. Nobody else in our family really did anything with music, that I know of.

On the new album, you get to sing four songs.

I do. It was fun. Well, while it was fun, it was gruelling, because I don't know if I should really admit this, but I had a terrible sinus infection at the time. We were staying in a little trailer next to the studio. The trailer was ever so slightly damp and for whatever reason, it just set my sinuses off. I had a really hard time doing some of those things. A couple of them I sang on the first day I was there, so it was no big deal. "The Mountain," in particular, was one that we sang on the very last possible day that we could record vocals – and it was rough. It was really hard to get that done. But, I'm happy with it. I think it was fun. Actually being a little bit sick, helped "Crocodile Man" [laughs].

That track is so much fun.

I love that song. I really – well, I love the album. I can say that about "When I Go," but it's a different kind of love from "When I Go." This one – "Tanglewood Tree," I just think it's fun. It just feels like a lot of fun to me, and I know that – when I think back to how we made it so quickly, just sixteen days and then we came back here and did a little more mixing and recorded one song in the kitchen. It was such a whirlwind and such an adventure. A lot of the singing that we do together on the new album was done

simultaneously, in different booths – separated by glass, so that we could see each other. Dave and I were just acting crazy in there, it was so much fun. During "Hey Conductor" and "Tanglewood Tree" and "Happytown" we were playing air guitar, and acting out the songs – and jumping up and down, and trying not to make noise into the mike – but trying to make the other person laugh. I think something about that, just for me, comes through when I listen to the thing. I think, "Yeah, that sounds really joyful. There's something happy going on there."

I love your "huh" at the end of "Crocodile Man."

[laughs] They all insisted that we really turn that up. That was Dave's job. When we did the mix we had all six of our hands – it was Mark [Thayer] and Dave and me. Everybody was responsible for a different couple of channels. Dave's job at the end was to push that up [laughs]. It was really fun to make that song. I actually sang it through a paper cup.

You've definitely made miles and miles of progress on the new album. "When I Go" was a particular time in your history as a duo, but "Tanglewood Tree," in terms of musical evolution, is much further down the road.

It feels like it is. It's getting a good response, which I'm happy about. I think, just for me, even if it didn't get a good response I'd still like listening to it. It was a really fun thing to make and the engineer was really supportive. It was nice to have a third party involved this time, in terms of deciding when it was good. If it were up to Dave and me, we would have laboured over it for another nine months. Worked out every little tweak – you know, funny breath – all these weird little things that nobody would ever hear – but Mark kept saying "No. It's good. Leave it." We trusted him. We figured "OK, we're tired and maybe we are getting a little too close to the project." So we listened to Mark and it paid off, I think. When I listen to "When I Go" that's the one thing I don't like about it, is that I know how we struggled to finish the CD. I think that maybe a little bit of the life was lost from it, because we worked on it so hard. Too hard, I think.

Actually I'm not very happy with "Tanglewood Tree" at the moment. It's so darned addictive, that it's stopping me from listening to anything else [laughs].

[laughs].

I asked Dave if the flowers on the liner of "Tanglewood Tree" were poppies, but he deferred to you.

Yeah, it's supposed to be poppies.

All we need now is to get you guys over to this side of the pond.

We would love to do that. We've just have to figure out how.

A Kerrverts Festival 50.



There is a reason, There is a rhyme,
There is a season, There is a time,
and then, there's the latest KERRVERTS FESTIVAL 50.

1. The Dutchman **MICHAEL SMITH & ANNE HILLS** "Paradise Lost & Found" Redwing Music RWMCD 5406 [1999]. #
2. The Way To Calvary **ROD MACDONALD** "Highway To Nowhere" Shanachie 8001 [1992].
3. Years **BETH NIELSEN CHAPMAN** "Beth Nielsen Chapman" Reprise 9 26172-2 [1990].
4. Tanglewood Tree **DAVE CARTER & TRACY GRAMMER** "Tanglewood Tree" Signature Sounds SIG 1257 [2000]. #
5. Light And Thunder **JOEL RAFAEL Band** "Hopper" Reluctant Angel/Inside Recordings RAM 0511 [2000]. #
6. DFW **JIMMIE DALE GILMORE** "One Endless Night" Windchanger Music/Rounder 3173 [2000]. #
7. Frank To Valentino **DAVE CARTER & TRACY GRAMMER** "When I Go" Red River Records no index no. [2000]. #
8. Yarrington Town **MICKIE MERKENS** "Texas Summer Nights, Vol. 1" Potato Satellite PS2-1000 [1983]. #
9. The Grocer's Broom **RICHARD SHINDELL** "Somewhere Near Paterson"
Signature Sounds/RS Recordings. SIG 1256 [2000]. #
10. I'm So Amazed **KIMMIE RHODES** "Rich From The Journey" Sunbird Records SBD 0001-2 [2000]. #
11. Poet's Heart **KATE WOLF** "Weaver of Visions : The Kate Wolf Anthology" Warner Bros./Rhino 8122-75596-2 [2000]. #
12. One Good Year **SLAID CLEAVES** "Broke Down" Philo 11671-1225-2 [2000]. #
13. Meanwhile the Rain **JOEL RAFAEL Band** "Old Wood Barn" Reluctant Angel RAM 0423 [1996]. #
14. Did Galileo Pray ? **ELLIS PAUL** "Live" Philo 11671-1229-2 [2000]. #
15. Working For Jesus **DAVE CARTER** "Snake Handlin' Man" no label no index no. [1995]. #
16. The Ballad Of Eddie Gay **PETER NELSON** "Days Like Horses" Signature Sounds SIG 1259 [2000]. #
17. Fire In Winter **TISH HINOJOSA** "Sign of Truth" CRS/Rounder 3172 [2000]. ^
18. I Ought To Know **JACK HARDY** "Omens" 1-800-Prime-CD & Brambus PCD69 & 200031-2 [2000]. # & ^
19. Sister Angelina **DAVID OLNEY** "Ghosts In The Wind - Live At La Casa" Barbed Wire Records BWR 2002 [2000]. #
20. Big Red **HUGH BLUMENFELD** "Big Red" Brambus 200030-2 [2000]. ^
21. The Bitter End **CHRISTINE LAVIN** "Absolutely Live" Winthrop WIN 1002-2 [1981 & 2000]. #
22. Faded Loves And Memories **BLAZE FOLEY** "Live at the Austin Outhouse" Lost Art Records no index no. [2000]. #
23. Killing America's Soul **WIGGINS SISTERS** "Minnesota" No label 91022 09872 [1999]. #
24. In Dark Irish Kitchens **TIM HARRISON** "Tim Harrison" Second Avenue SAS 2005 [1999]. #
25. Words Too Small To Say **PETER MULVEY** "The Trouble With Poets" Signature Sounds SIG 1258 [2000]. #
26. Eleanor **GWIL OWEN** "Magnetic Heaven" Earnest Whitney Entertainment EWE 001 [1999]. #
27. Stages Of My Life **JIM RINGER & MARY McCASLIN** "The Bramble and the Rose" Philo CD PH 1055 [1978 : 2000]. #
28. The Lights Of Paris **CINDY BULLENS** "Somewhere Between Heaven and Earth" Artemis Records ART 1012 [1999]. #
29. Road Hawg **JOE ELY** "Live At Antone's" Rounder RRCD 3171 [2000]. #
30. Spanish Is A Loving Tongue **EMMYLOU HARRIS** "Cimarron" Eminent EM-25030-2 [1981 : 2000]. #
31. Boy From The Country **MARY McCASLIN** "Rain - The Lost Album" Bear Family BCD 16232 AH [1999]. #
32. Swinging From The Yardarm **IAIN MATTHEWS** "The Tiniest Wham" Perfect Pitch PP006 [2000]. ^
33. Beautiful Dreamer **ELIZA GILKYSON** "Misfits" Realiza Records 0023 [1999]. #
34. White Sands **THOMAS ANDERSON** "Bolide" Red River 1802 [1997]. #
35. Wild In The Sixties **DAVID MALLET** "Ambition" Flying Fish CD FF 674 [1999]. #
36. Sunny's Diner **TOM RUSSELL** "Diamond Cuts - Triple Play" Hungry For Music HFM007 [1999]. #
37. Roads In Disrepair **ANDREW CALHOUN** "Where Blue Meets Blue" Waterbug WBG 0049 [1999]. #
38. Two Bends In The Road **LOUISE TAYLOR** "Written In Red" Signature Sounds SIG 1259 [2000]. #
39. Snakes **SUSAN McKEOWN** "The Song Poets - Prime CD's Fifth Anniversary Collection" Prime CD [1999]. #
40. The Boy Who Never Cried **STEVE EARLE** "Transcendental Blues" Artemis ARTCD-21 [2000].
41. Long May You Run **EMMYLOU HARRIS** "Last Date" Eminent EM-25040-2 [1982 : 2000]. #
42. Chinese Silver **TOM RUSSELL** "Heart on a Sleeve" Edsel/Demon [1984 : 2000].
43. Faded Love **ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL** c/w **SHAWN COLVIN & LYLE LOVETT**
"Ride With Bob" Dreamworks DRMD-50117 [1999].
44. Starting All Over **CHRISTINE COLLISTER** "Songbird" Fledg'ling FLED 3025 [1999].
45. High School Town **BERKLEY HART** "Wreck N' Sow" Stoneground CEH106 [2000]. #
46. River And The Rain **BILL MILLER** "Healing Waters" JVO Records GCBCCD4 [1999].
47. Mountain Girl **JUDY COLLINS** "Live At Wolftrap" Windflower Records 81296-2 [1999]. #
48. Why **STACEY EARLE** "Dancing With Them That Brung Me" Gearle Records 2803-2 [2000]. #
49. Miriam Bell **LOUISE TAYLOR** "Written In Red" Signature Sounds SIG 1259 [2000]. #
50. Heal In The Wisdom **BOBBY BRIDGER** "Kerrville Folk Festival - Live 1986" (cassette only, no index no.) [1987]. #



waitin' their turn :- Ain't No Sunshine **EVA CASSIDY** "Time After Time" Blix Street/Hot G2-10073 [2000]. # ; Annabel **DON HENLEY** "Inside Job" Warner Bros. 9362-47083-2 ; Joyful, Joyful **BROOKS WILLIAMS** "Little Lion" Signature Sounds SIG 1255 [2000]. # ; Long Way Home From Anywhere **BRUCE ROBISON** "Long Way Home From Anywhere" Lucky Dog CK69173 [1999]. # ; Crazy Or Courageous **JOHN McCUTCHEON** "Storyed Ground" Rounder Select CD 0467 [1999]. # ; When I Go **GREG BROWN & FRIENDS** [feat. **DAVE CARTER & TRACY GRAMMER**] "Solid Heart" In Harmony no index no. [1999]. #

NOTE. All albums released in the UK, unless marked otherwise. US releases marked #. European releases ^. Japanese releases *. Introductory rhyme taken from the Bobby Bridger song, "Heal In The Wisdom" - The Kerrville Folk Festival Anthem.

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Editorial.

This is the first issue of the Kronikle, to date, that has afforded – and justifiably – so much space to a single performer – or at least, in this case, a duo. Lest the truth surface one day, I must admit that when my Illinois pal, Ed Becker, sent me a copy of **"When I Go"** by Dave Carter with Tracy Grammer, in late 1998, it didn't really move me. Some days, *coagulated ear candy* [yuk !!!] gets in the way of clear, considered thought. Well, that's my excuse. Due to restrictions in storage space, these days, any CD not deemed a *keeper* is immediately recycled via a second hand store. Curiously, **"When I Go"** was placed on a shelf – and there it survived for almost another year. In November last year, **Folk Roots** sent me a copy of **"When I Go"** – this time the choices were limited – I had to listen to it all over again, and this time, I had to review it. In the days that followed, let's just say countless pieces fell into place. And that's the reason for the interviews, the album reviews and the mass of Top 50 entries by Dave & Tracy in this issue. The duo deserve your total support. If you haven't already got their entire catalogue, set about remedying that situation today. You know it makes sense. Oh yes, and just in case you were wondering, at no cost to the new owner, the second copy of **"When I Go"** found a home in a log cabin where it is loved and cherished as the work of genius that it is.

The sad news for former readers of Peter O'Brien's **Omaha Ranbow** which regularly featured the writing of Roxy Gordon, is that Roxy passed away on the afternoon of Monday 7th February in an Abilene, Texas hospital. He was 54. Gordon was born March 7, 1945 in Ballinger, Texas of Choctaw parents, Bob and Louise Gordon. He grew up in Talpa, Texas and married Judy Hoffman in 1964. He attended the University of Texas in Austin, and went on to travel extensively. In the late '60s, before moving to California, he lived in Montana where he embraced his Indian heritage. During this period, he developed a strong relationship with the Assiniboine tribe, who later adopted him. In the mid '70s, Roxy relocated to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he ran a country music magazine, **Picking Up The Tempo**, for three years and met well-known musicians Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings,

Billy Joe Shaver, David Allen Coe and Chuck Berry. Roxy returned to Texas, and East Dallas in 1976. By the time he moved on to family land outside Talpa in 1997, he had created an international following for his writing and music – as a poet, songwriter, performer and author. He will, naturally, be best remembered as a storyteller.

During his life, he wrote poems and short stories, including **"Some Things I Did"** and **"Breeds."** He released three albums. In 1997 John Tobler's label Road Goes On Forever, with some assistance from the aforementioned Mr. O'Brien released Roxy's **"Smaller Circles."** Peter's Sunstorm Records in association with the now defunct imprint Heartland Records, issued another album – the enigmatically titled **"Crazy Horse Never Died"** – in 1988. Roxy's first album was titled **"Unfinished Business."** Just prior to his passing, Roxy was working on another album. I was privileged to see him perform at the Quiet Valley Ranch, on Saturday, June 3rd 1989. Rod Kennedy had organised a Native American Tribute Concert.

A Roxy Gordon Memorial Concert was planned for the Sons of Hermann Hall in Dallas on Sunday, May 14, 2000. The performers/speakers included Steve Young, Terry Allen, Tommy X. Hancock, The Texana Dames, Jeff Liles, The Gourds, Michael Martin, The Ackermans, Frank X. Tolbert, Jr., Robert Trammell and others.

Roxy is survived by his wife, Judy, his mother, Louise, his adopted Assiniboine parents, John and Minerva Allen, and two sons and one daughter-in-law, J.C. and Corinne Gordon and Quanah Parker Gordon.

As I began putting the final touches to issue #27, Jane Siberry announced that she was about to release another album. Currently known as **"Untitled"** it is a collection of, her arrangements of, traditional songs. Officially available in stores in North America in September, copies will be available from her www.sheeba.ca web site in late June.

Regarding the contents of this issue, and in no particular order, thanks are due to **Rod Kennedy, Dave Carter, Tracy Grammer, [Mama] Michaela O'Brien, [Papa] Nat Reade, the new arrival Henry Coughlin O'Brien Reade and Alpha Ray.** This issue is, of course, dedicated to the memory of the late, great wordsmith Roxy Gordon.

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12th July 1983

Eden's first rain
fell quietly I'm sure,
not like those fury-filled menaces
that thrash and flash
and tear into the limbs
of a Central Texas night,
but the slow-falling
gentle dripping hum
of a new morning rain --
the kind to make the hills
still themselves in misty green
and know that they are



Alpha Ray